MODERN DRUMMER™

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September 1983

M'BOOM

ERIC CARR

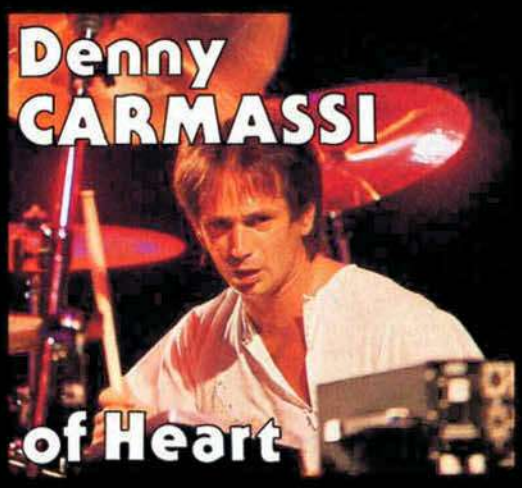
of Kiss

Plus:

FRED BELOW

Close-Up On Semi-Pro Drumkits

Dénny CARMASSI



of Heart

The graphics on Myron's drums are his initials in Japanese. Design by Jeff J. Chonis, artwork by Patrick Foley, L.A.

Ask him to play something besides Ludwig, and Myron Grombacher gets nervous.

Pat Benatar's Band live is full-contact rock, and Myron Grombacher throws a lot of the punches. He doesn't play drums, he attacks them. And the assault comes from every angle – behind, beside, in front of, and on top of his kit.

But you don't need to see Myron to appreciate his power, speed, and finesse. It comes through just as strong in the studio. "Get Nervous," Benatar's latest, is proof.

Get nervous is also something Myron Grombacher would do if you asked him to play drums he couldn't depend on. That's why, on stage and in the studio, Myron plays Ludwig six-ply shell drums and Ludwig heads.

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Cover Photos-
M'Boom by Charles Stewart
Eric Carr by En Stejes
Denny Carmassi by Neal Preston

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When Max Roach first proposed having a jazz group made up entirely of drummers, the news was greeted with a certain amount of skepticism. But Roach and his colleagues knew what they were doing, and now, 12 years later, M'Boom is recognized as an important voice in modern music. All eight members of this remarkable group sat down with MD for this informative discussion.
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If there is such a thing as overnight success, then Eric Carr is a perfect example—club drummer in Brooklyn one day, member of Kiss the next. When an opportunity to join a major group occurs, one has to be ready for it, and Eric describes the years of dues paying that prepared him for his shot at the top.
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DENNY CARMASSI
Although he is new to the group Heart, Denny Carmassi is not new to upper-echelon rock, having worked with such artists as Ronnie Montrose, Sammy Hagar and Michael Schenker. Here, he traces his background and comments on his current activities.
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EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Something for Everyone

If there's one thing I've learned after seven years as Editor *of Modern Drummer,* it's that you can't please everyone when it comes to the editorial balance of each issue.

Deciding what goes into an issue of *MD,* and establishing an appropriate balance of articles, is not a decision I make alone. Fortunately, I have a fine editorial team that cares as much as I do about what goes into every issue. Each month, the entire group files into my office for a lengthy conference to plan out the issues you'll be reading five or six months down the road. Proper balance is our prime objective, and though balance revolves around the choice of feature material for the most part, it also includes a department format and selection of articles, graphics, musical examples, and more, in an attempt to weave the varied subject matter into one, cohesive product.

However, it's rare when all of the readership agrees with our decision. For example, an issue containing feature interviews with two rock drummers and one jazz player is apt to bring mail from the jazz purists. Too much emphasis on jazz drumming, and we invariably hear from those readers who only want to read about their favorite rock drummers. Amidst these conflicting interests, we also hear from the heavy metal, symphonic, Latin and drum corps oriented players who demand to see their interests represented. Obviously, it's close to impossible to please *everyone* in *every* issue. Space limitations prohibit it. What we can do, however, is keep the majority of readers satisfied, and deal with special interest groups through various other formats available in the magazine.

How do we determine where the majority interests lie? Through readership surveys and reader mail, basically. We know, for instance, that the majority of readers are into some form of rock drumming, followed by jazz, clubdate, studio, symphonic, rudimental and Latin players, in that order. And though we hesitate to ignore the peripheral segments of the audience, we are forced to deal with them sparingly. *Complete Percussionist, Driver's Seat, Club Scene, South Of The Border, Show & Studio* and *Rudimental Symposium,* among others, offers the opportunity to balance things out on an in-depth basis for the smaller special interest groups.

On several occasions, we've handled special interests through special issues. The *N. Y.* and *L.A. Studio Scene* issues, and *Country/Rock Scene* were examples of this approach. All were designed to focus on a smaller, special interest segment. But, as you might have suspected, though the C/R issue was a hit with the country fans, the jazz element was somewhat put out with that particular issue, and the Latin contingent found little of great interest in our studio scene specials. It gets back to what I said earlier. When it comes to balancing editorial for such a wide group, you can't expect to please everyone all the time.

RS

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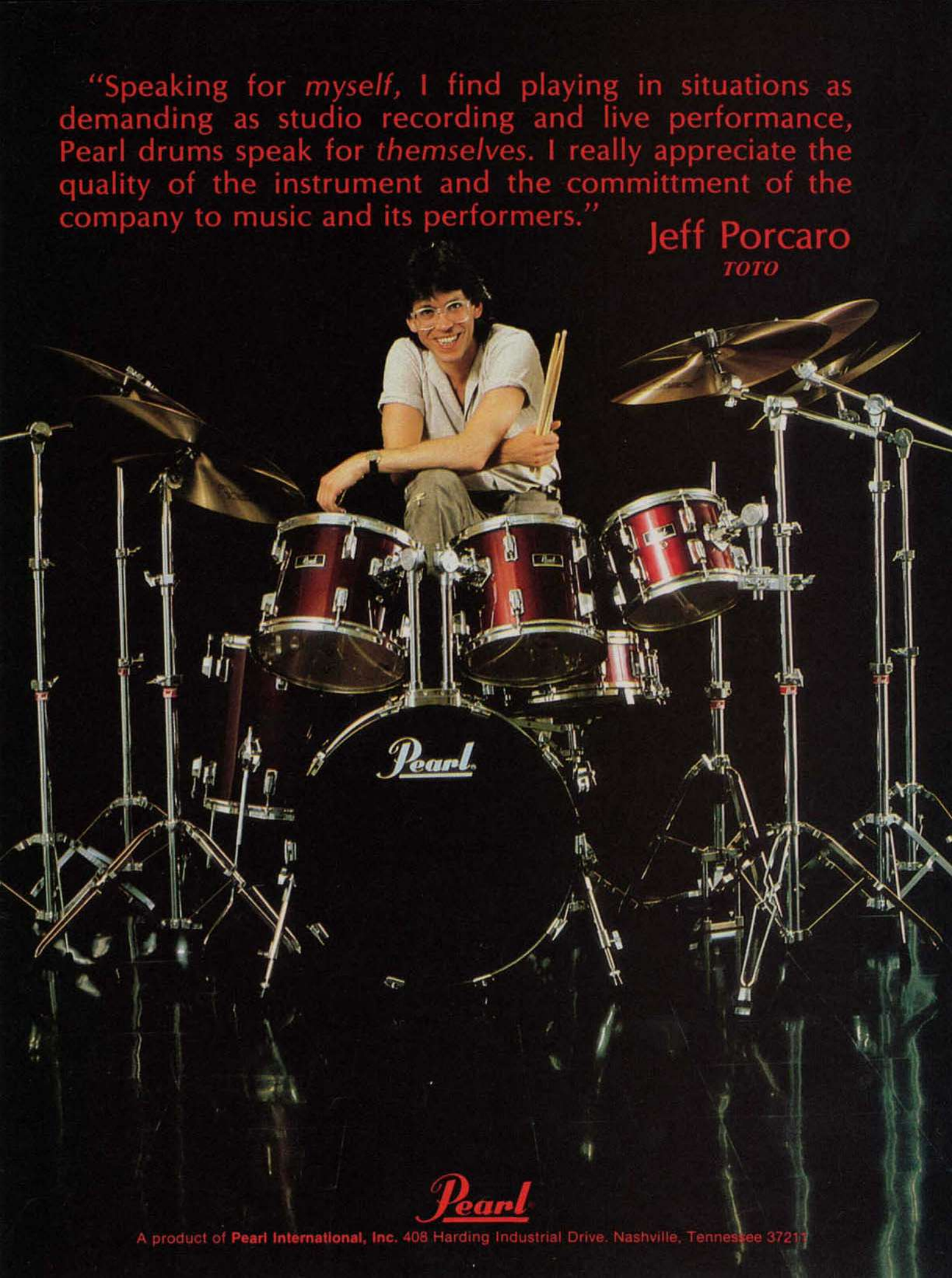
Jeff Porcaro
TOTO



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READER'S PLATFORM

PROS: ON BASS DRUMS
Your article on bass drums by the pros was excellent. I tried some ideas from Danny Gottlieb, Paul T. Riddle, David Garibaldi, Roy Burns, Mark Craney and Artimus Pyle on my bass drums—ranging in sizes of 20", 22" and 24"—and had good results tuning them.

Tremblay Benoit
Brossard, Quebec
Canada

BURNED UP
Roy Burns' evaluation and analysis on endorsers and artist relations in the April '83 MD smacks as being both self-serving and cynical. To pass judgement and appear to be so above it all is somewhat hypocritical from a person who has been from company to company seeking his own personal fortune at the expense of others. MD would do best to publish real information that would help to promote the art. Drummers today have enough common sense to figure things out for themselves and don't need all this psychology on what is good or bad for them with analogy and innuendo. Perhaps that was needed in Mr. Burns' day!

Joe McCarthy
Summit, NJ

HANDLING HOTELS
Your article "Handling Hotels" should be required reading for *every* musician working on the road. The scenarios you offer as examples are not the least bit unrealistic. After five years on the road, the check-in you describe seems tame compared to some I've experienced. I suggest that this article be run on an annual basis. It's one that bears repeating for those that might have missed it this time around.

Bennett McLeod
Deland, FL

NIGHT CLUB SMOG
Jim Dearing's "Night Club Smog" really hit home with me and members of our band. It seems to be a common problem everywhere we go. Being a drummer/lead vocalist, I work at an intense level onstage and I've found that where smoke is not a problem, my concentration is much better. Thanks for trying to spread the word about an annoying problem.

Barry Earhart
Grossville, TN

MARK CRANEY
Thanks for the long-awaited interview with Mark Craney. As a friend and fellow drummer from Mark's hometown, I'd like to congratulate MD on capturing the true essence of an exceptional musician and fine human being. Mark's drumming and outlook have long been an inspiration to me and will continue to be throughout my career and life.

Dick Bartling
Sioux Falls, SD

MD TOO EXPENSIVE?
I'm fortunate to have 42 of the 44 issues MD has published to date. Your high standard of excellence was well in evidence in your June '83 edition, and honestly, it was one of your best yet. Every article and interview shed another splinter of light (or more) on the art and mystery of drumming. All my magazines together cost less than $90. That's a tiny investment for the enormous wealth of information I've absorbed. You folks have turned me on to dozens of superb percussive craftsmen.

Darryl Crawford
Arlington, TX

Through the years, I've watched MD go from a mediocre quarterly magazine, to a fantastic monthly publication. True, the price has increased, but so has your output of information. A true drum enthusiast would pay any price for *Modern Drummer.* You really have helped and inspired me through the years. Thanks.

Marc Weiswasser
Las Vegas, NV

KENWOOD DENNARD
Thank you for the article on Kenwood Dennard. I have been studying with him for a year now and he has been very helpful and inspiring.

Rob Borg
Princeton, NJ

BRUFORD
Not only was the interview by Scott K. Fish on Bill Bruford excellent, but the cover photo of Bill by William Coupon on the June issue of MD was phenomenal. When I first glanced at the cover I took a double take, because I thought, "My, what a nice oil painting."

Gentleman Jeff Spink
Towson, MD

ANALYZING STYLE
"Analyzing Style" by Rick Van Horn will be a great help to me. I doubt if this lesson could have been purchased at a music store. So many of us who aren't able to enjoy music on a full-time basis, lack the essential information necessary for moving forward. This article opens the doors for further understanding. It has helped me a great deal.

Charles W. Pappis
Houston, TX

OFF THE RECORD
My article "Off The Record" in the *Jobbing Drummer* column of MD June '83 contains an error. On page 58 there are two musical examples showing how hand drum rhythms can be played with the left hand on concert toms, mounted bongos, or similar, while the right hand plays a disco beat on hi-hat and snare drum. The first example is a Samba, the second is a Mambo.

The left hand Samba rhythm has been reprinted in the second example as being the right hand accompaniment for the left hand Mambo rhythm. The right hand accompaniment is supposed to be the same for both examples: the disco beat on hi-hat and snare drum. I intended that the second example should show the left hand Mambo rhythm with the instruction to play the same right hand part as in the first example.

My apologies to the MD editors for not making this sufficiently clear, and also to any readers who have been confused by it.

Simon Goodwin
Brighton, England.

HAWAIIAN VIEWPOINT
I wonder how many readers are aware of one very important function of MD? With playing styles, concepts, equipment and everything connected with drumming changing so rapidly these days, it would be impossible to stay up with the business through books. Books could take two years from conception to reach the drum shops.

On the other hand, MD can put new ideas from the cream of our profession—on anything from rudiments to repairs—in our hands in two months. As a player and teacher, MD is an essential part of my equipment.

Warren Walker
Lahaina, HI

STEWART COPELAND AND TAMA: ARMED AND DANGEROUS ...

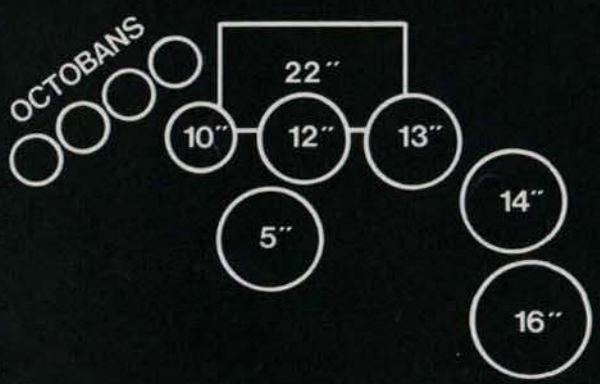
Citizens be warned: be on the lookout for Stewart Copeland and the Police last seen on tour and headed in your direction. Copeland is dangerously armed with the industry standard of heavyweight wood drums, TAMA Imperialstar. He is known to make use of smaller size 9 ply Imperialstar drums for their ability to deliver extra volatile firepower.

"SYNCHRONICITY"

Copeland also travels with a full array of rugged TAMA hardware and TAMA Octobans for unique rapid-fire melodic fills.

Forewarned is forearmed - get yourself behind a set of Tama drums and see just how good your sound can be.

Special Thanks To Jeff Seitz



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ASK A PRO

PETER ERSKINE

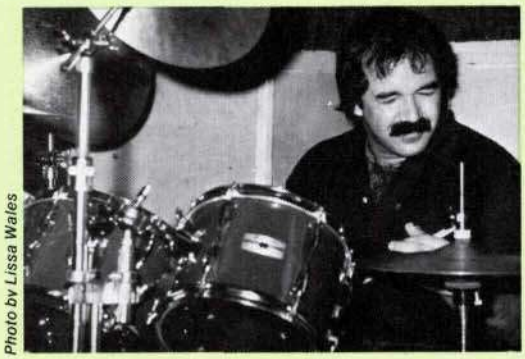

Photo by Lissa Wales

Q. I recently bought a set of Yamaha *Recording Series* custom drums. I'm having trouble muffling and tuning. The sizes are similar to yours: 10", 12", and 13" mounted toms, a 20" kick and a 5 1/2" snare. I like how your drums sounded on the last Weather Report album and on Jaco's *Word of Mouth* tour. Can you give me some muffling and tuning hints and tell me how you got those sounds?

Mark W. Fuller
Arlington Heights, IL

A. We took a lot of care getting a drum sound for the Weather Report album, and when you're hearing drums "larger than life" in a concert situation, it's hard to duplicate in the basement. I always dealt with my *drumset one-to-one. I realized that certain sounds were processed with EQ or whatever and that I'd have to find my own way. In both instances I used coated Remo* Ambassadors *on the top and* Ambassador *clear heads on the bottom. This was instinctive, dictated by my ear. Remo said that one of the characteristics of this clear head is that, for the same weight head, they're slightly* higher *in pitch than the coated. The coating process lowers the pitch slightly* before *putting any external tensioning on it. In combination, this gives me what I like. I have used* Pinstripes *for some recording and funkier live settings. The only muffling needed on Yamahas is to control excessive overtone ring. They speak and sound best* unchoked. *Yamaha makes the best external mufflers. They don't rattle and the foam is the right texture and quality.*

Steve Gadd once pointed out that internal mufflers do not make sense. They eventually rattle and, worse, they push up against the bottom of the head while you're playing down on it. Yamaha drums don't have internal mufflers. On other drums you may want to remove the internal mufflers and muffle externally. I use mufflers on just a couple of drums in the set-up.

The tuning ranges of the drums are in a high-to-low sweep with the 10" drum cranked up to a timbale-like sound and the 14" floor tom tuned to a low, fat, gutsy sound. The bass drum is stuffed with a packing blanket in the studio and the funkier live stuff.

With Jaco I used an 18" bass drum with no *muffling. With Weather Report, I mostly used a 22" bass, though at one point I was using an 18", cranked up for a lot of definition as opposed to that real low frequency.*

As for tuning, first make sure that the head is properly seated on the shell. Then, add a little tension to the bottom head getting it in tune with itself. Do the same to the top. Now, I'd push my index finger into the center of the drum head about 1/16" and then begin tapping around the lugs in order to hear the overtones and to see what part of the head is higher or lower than the other. Experience tells you that the top head is where you go for fine tuning and touch response. After the heads are in tune to themselves, the trick is to get one tensioned relative to the other. The bottom head has a lot of effect in determining pitch. If the bottom is too slack or tight, particularly on the larger drums, it chokes the sound. As a general rule, avoid extremes in muffling, tuning and going for certain pitches. What I seem *to do is tune the bottom for pitch and the top for touch but this isn't a rule by any means. I'm not too particular that the touch on every head be uniform.*

Some drums are part of the tuning problem, but Yamaha drums are perfectly round so the responsibility is ours. *What might help beginning drummers to get their ears accustomed to what an in-tune head sounds like, is to listen to the Remo* PTS *heads.*

RICK MAROTTA

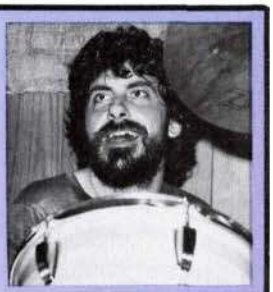

Photo by Rick Malkin

Q. I have followed your drumming career since your early days with *Brethren* and just want to say that I enjoy your playing tremendously. I always wondered what your favorite recorded performance is?

T.S.
Papua, New Guinea

A. I don't know if I've done it yet. I hope not but, so far, there's a couple of records that I think are real good. I did this album for Jerry Le Croix a long time ago, called Second Coming. *One reason that I liked it so much was that it was dedicated to Edgar Winter's drummer, from White Trash, who'd just been killed in Chicago. Jerry worked with him also and it was a real personal, feeling kind of thing to do these sessions. Also, Steve Gadd came to all those sessions with me. He was just starting in New York and that was special. I also liked* Peg, *the Steely Dan tune.*

RON TUTT

Q. What was the drum and cymbal set-up you were using during the 76 tour with Elvis Presley? Are you still recording?

Mike Johnson
McKinney, TX

A. I was using a Ludwig set that was pretty strange. They quit making them I think. I had the prototype. They took Vistalite *shells that were opaque white and put a veneer of chrome on top. They were as loud as cannons and incredibly heavy. The tom-tom size range was 12", 13", 14", 15", 16" and 18", with two 26" bass drums. The cymbals were all Zildjian, except for one Paiste. They were 14" hi-hats, two 18" crashes, a 16" crash, a 22" swish and a 22" medium Paiste ride. As of November 1981, I joined Neil Diamond's band and have been recording and touring with him. I've just finished an album with Rick Nelson, another one with Johnny Rivers, and various freelance calls come in all the time.*

Finding the right sounds is a matter of looking in the right places.—Stewart Copeland

Stewart Copeland's playing is a sensuous integration of sounds and rhythms. His keen awareness of sound and pulse developed from his musical experiences in the Middle East, Africa, Europe and his native America.

His search for the right cymbal sounds led him to Paiste—the widest cymbal selection anywhere in the world. In his own words:

"Sound and rhythm are inescapable parts of life. What I do on the drum set is to really tie into this rhythm of life and let it drive whatever music I'm playing. In practical terms, this leads to a lot of experimentation with sounds.

"My Paiste cymbals are an amazingly expressive collection of instruments. Some speak very fast, others swell like waves—some are rough and aggressive, while others are soft and polite.

"So you see, finding the right sounds is a matter of looking in the right places".

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Stewart Copeland's Paiste cymbal set . . .

PAiSTe
CYMBALS SOUNDS GONGS

M'BOOM

Photo by Charles Stewart

by Rick Mattingly and Scott K. Fish

When two or more drummers get together, traditionally, it's a battle. Or is it? What about in Africa, where a great deal of the music is performed by large drum ensembles, in which each member has a specific part to play and all of the parts fit together into a cohesive whole? And what about Latin music, which has a similar percussive structure? Even in European orchestral music, there is traditionally a percussion section. *So where did this idea of the battling drummers come from?*

It came from right here in America, where the emphasis is on competition, and drummers are often judged by "athletic" standards, such as, "Who's the fastest?" Other instruments are not viewed in such an aggressive light; when two pianists get together it's called a duet. So why are drummers so prone to do battle with each other?

Maybe they're not. Maybe it's a role they were forced into by promoters who couldn't conceive of drummers playing music *together, so there had to be some kind of gimmick to draw an audience. But most of the drummers themselves knew better, and they were always getting together—not to "out-chops" each other, but to play music. If the onlookers didn't understand, well. . .*

When the members of M'Boom get together and play, the result is music. After a joint concert with the World Saxophone Quartet a couple of years ago, one attendee remarked, "M'Boom was more melodic than the saxophones!" Anyone who goes to hear this group expecting a drum battle is in for a surprise. Anyone who goes to hear M'Boom in order to hear percussion explored in new ways is in for a treat. Anyone who goes to hear them for any reason is in for an experience.

Note: Because Max Roach founded this group, and because of his stature in the music business, he has understandably been recognized as the group's spokesman. Indeed, the esteem in which he is regarded by the other members of M'Boom was evident to us throughout this interview. But Max considers each member of the group to be equal, and so, in order to redirect the spotlight away from himself, he chose to not be present for the first half of this discussion.

SF: Let's start with the concept of M'Boom. The group has been around 12 years. How did it start?

Waits: For me, what started M'Boom was a call from Mr. Roach, asking me if I would be interested in something of this sort. At the time, he didn't have a knowledge of exactly what we would be involved in musically. But he knew that it was something that, in the future, would be very valid. He asked

me if I had any ideas for being part of it, and I said, "Certainly." We set a date that we were all going to get together. Max had that vision, and we all came together in this very room and sat down and began to work out, verbally at first, what we thought this kind of situation could do. What would be the first step? How would we go, step by step, to make the whole picture come together?

What you see now is the result of the last 12 years. It has taken that length of time because of the activities of every individual in M'Boom. As you know, everybody here has his own working situation as a leader, and we are all involved in a lot of sideman work. M'Boom was never put to us as something that we would depend on for an income.

To me, M'Boom is a vast institution, and since I've been involved in it, it has been a tremendous help to me musically. It's probably been my most inspirational musical point over the last 12 years. There are so many directions to go in, because I'm dealing with the most powerful musicians on the planet. From an educational vantage point, I can ask these people for information and study with them. All of these people are just incredible musicians.

To have the perception that Mr. Roach had to bring all of these people together into an organization like this is incredible. I don't know how he came about it. You'll have to find that out from him. But, I guess you can imagine how ecstatic I felt about receiving a call like that. He had been my childhood idol, and that call was the first time I had really spoken to him on a person-to-person level. Not only did he call and ask me to be part of his organization, but he was also saying that it was supposed to be a cooperative organization. He did not want to be the principal figure, although we accept him as that because of who he is and what he has done. To watch a man of that humility accept all of us as equals on the bandstand is another incredible thing.

Mantilla: You said it all.

SF: Are these all the same people who were here 12 years ago?

Waits: M'Boom was started with the exact people you see here now, except Mr. King. He was the latest . . .

Brooks: And Mr. Mantilla.

Wails: Mr. Mantilla was added so soon afterwards that we all think of him as being an original member. When we sat down in some of our first meetings, I remember Chambers saying, "You know, we don't have a *proper* representative of Latin percussion." And I think it hit everybody at the same time. I knew *I* didn't want to step out there on the Latin percussion, and nobody else did. [laughter] All of us had a working knowledge of it, but we looked at who *we* were and decided that we needed somebody who could fill that spot, and still be able to function in the other situations. So that brought about Mr. Mantilla.

Mantilla: This group was already two years old, and I was working with Art Blakey. I had known Max Roach for 20 years; I worked with him on the *Freedom Now Suite.* So what happened was, Mr. Chambers came down and saw me with Art Blakey, and they just happened to need a percussionist. He was the one who brought me in after they got the okay from Max. So I came in to deal with these people.

Being a percussionist from the Latin community who played with different jazz drummers, I considered myself as having played with the top jazz drummers in the world, you know. *Now* I'm with the greatest of them in the world. These are the cats. Max is, to me, the *super* drummer of the world.

You see all this percussion here? If it hadn't been for the hand drums in the beginning, and the guys beating on logs, we wouldn't have all these sounds that came out of that. So we have to have the hand drums represented here. So they have their tom-toms, and I have my low drums called tumbadoras; they have the snare drum and I have my quinto; they have their metal sounds, which come from playing on the sides of the Latin instruments. They used to play on the sides of the bongos before they had timbales. The bongo was the first actual drum to come out of Africa.

Chambers: It wasn't called a bongo.

Mantilla: Right. It was just called two hand drums; a low drum and a high drum.

Brooks: It was a congo. [laughs]

Mantilla: Don't you start giving me *that!* [laughter] I get really dragged when they say congos. That sounds like ... I don't want to say. [much laughter]

Brooks: Let me say one thing: The multiple percussion set—the drumset—is the only original American instrument.

Waits: You know, one thing I remember was that in some of our first rehearsals, we began to ask each other, "What do you think this is [pointing to a drumset]? What is this thing, or these things, or whatever?" So out of that came the name "multiple percussion instrument." Mr. Smith, I believe, thought of that.

Chambers: My concept of the drumset is that it's supposed to give the illusion of four people playing. Now, that came out of the marching band, right? Could it be that using one drummer to play all this stuff was economically practical in New Orleans? Maybe they said, "Let's just use one guy because we can't afford four."

Clay: Maybe some of the other guys didn't show up and one guy got creative—"I can do both gigs!"

King: The idea of the one-man band had a lot to do with it.

Chambers: Yeah, the one-man band.

Brooks: Buddy Bolden and those people used three people to play all the instruments.

Clay: It started with the bass drum that had a cymbal mounted on top,

Photo by Charles Stewart

back in the 1800s, I think. That was one of the things that was used in the New Orleans marching bands.

King: I think you've got something there.

Waits: [to Mantilla] I was wondering, what were your feelings when you first came here? Because we had no idea what you were going to do.

Mantilla: Neither did I.

Waits: None of us did.

Mantilla: See, for me, this is something that opened me up completely. I'm bringing this Latin thing to what these gentlemen do. For me, this is like a school. I'm using my culture, and I'm expanding into the mallet instruments and the timpani. I feel like I'm coming from the real floor, and working up. Like the man with the shovel who starts with a strong foundation. The conga drum—that particular type of instrument—is a very physical instrument, and it's also down to earth. We have to have our bottom. So the congas are my bass line, and I'm building from there. So my thing is expanding more and more, and I think it's making me 100% more musician. I'm growing within the group and with these gentlemen, and I can see this thing going on for a long, long time. You know, we all work together. Joe works in my band, Mr. Smith works in my band, Mr. Clay writes arrangements for me and the other gentlemen. We will keep helping each other in the future and working together.

As far as my particular input in here, when I came in they already had the idea of what they wanted to do. All I did was add my little bit of knowledge. We're all learning from each other. I'm learning from them, and they're learning from me.

SF: So everybody has to play everything?

Chambers: That's an important key. Everyone is supposed to be able to play all the stuff eventually, if they don't already.

Photos by Charles Stewart

Roy Brooks

Performed and recorded with Horace Silver, Yusef Lateef, Charles Mingus, James Moody, Wes Montgomery, Sonny Stitt and others. Has also formed his own groups called Artistic Truth and the Aboriginal Percussion Choir. Mr. Brooks is living in Detroit, continuing to present the drumset and percussion in unique situations such as a drum/trumpet duet with Woody Shaw, and his own solo concerts.

Joe Chambers

Has recorded with Charles Mingus, Sonny Rollins, Donald Byrd, Archie Shepp and others. Also has recorded under his own name. Excellent composer, arranger and percussionist.

"THE CONCEPT OF DRUMMERS PLAYING TOGETHER IS THE ONLY WAY TO GO, IF YOU CHECK IT OUT."

Brooks: I'm learning timbales right now.

SF: Warren, how did you develop that timpani technique you use on "Epistrophy"?

Smith: Well, it wasn't so much a matter of developing it as it was that Joe Chambers asked me to play it. So I played it. [laughter]

Mantilla: When Joe says "Play it," you play it!

Waits: Over the years, I think each individual in M'Boom has grown. I remember how we would get into one piece of music at some of our first rehearsals. Joe brought in a piece, and we worked with it, and worked with it, and extracted from it, and added to it, and put hours into it. Prior to M'Boom, I hadn't really involved myself in a *great* amount of other percussion instruments, other than the multiple percussion instrument. I had played some of them, but never with any degree of seriousness. M'Boom immediately dropped on me the fact that I must get quite a few things together to deal with these guys. First of all, on a compositional level, Chambers right away began presenting his compositions, which were on a very high level. It wasn't anything you could expect to deal with on an instrument as a beginner. That meant that I had to do the beginning work on one spot, and come to the rehearsal with a whole other attitude, just to comply with *trying* to play the vibes. After doing that, then I had to learn how not to play too much, how to leave space, play softly or be loud at the right time. I came with so many problems, that I couldn't understand why Mr. Roach had called me. I had so many things that I felt I had to get together, but in these 12 years, it's helped me so much outside of M'Boom, that to come back to M'Boom is gratifying.

That makes it hard for us to go out and work with other people sometimes, because of the kind of intelligence we acquire here and the understanding we have for music itself and for the basic rhythm concept. I mean, all of us laugh about how we hate to leave M'Boom—especially after that month we spent in Europe, where we had an opportunity to really be together as men and as musicians—and have to go out and work with other people. It's never the same level as what *we're* trying to do.

To look at it in another aspect, it's human. We've learned so much about just being *men* around each other, and about how to accept each other. I'm sure that probably happens in other groups, but I can only speak about M'Boom because this, at this point, is my most interactive project.

Brooks: Most groups don't stay together 12 years.

Waits: Right, and do the fighting that we have had to do. I mean, these things have come about out of necessity. There have been times when a fight was necessary, and I mean fighting just to get across an 8th note maybe, or to get across a texture or a color. And once it's done, and the fighting is resolved and the color comes out, everybody says, "Wow, that's right!" It's not anything that anybody has to convince you about; the intelligence of each individual accepts it. So, as I said, leaving that and going into other situations is very hard. But everybody here has their own individual situations that they deal with, and it gives each of us another kind of strength and brings another kind of expression into this group.

Brooks: The concept of drummers playing together is the only way to go, if you check it out. When I first came to New York, and I'd be with Ed Blackwell and Idris Muhammed and certain other guys, we'd always talk about playing. "I like the way you play, man. We should play together some time." You know what I mean? That's another facet. It's not the battle of the drums kind of stuff, but drummers playing together, making music.

King: I'd like to say something about the concept of M'Boom that excites me the most, and that is—as Mr. Mantilla and Mr. Waits have already said so eloquently—that it is a school. And there's a spirit here. It doesn't matter where you come from or what you bring with you—you're going to have to go to school. And there's an attitude that you *will* go to school. You will take criticism, but you always know that the criticism is given because you're seeking to grow. It's not someone just *saying* something, as it was implied that a horn player might just say something. There's a camaraderie here. And the thing I want to emphasize—what I find so exciting—is that unlike

Omar Clay

Performed and recorded with Sarah Vaughan, Roberta Flack, Dionne Warwick and many more. He's experienced in Broadway shows, opera and symphonic work. Mr. Clay has been leaching Afro-American Music at San Francisco State for the last two years. He is also working on his Master of Arts degree in Music Education and will be looking for a leaching position.

Fred King

Percussionist/arranger/composer. Trained in theory composition, conducting and ethnomusicology. Advanced degrees from the University of Iowa and the Julliard School. He initiated a school of percussion while with Noah Greenberg's New York Pro Musica, and organized percussion studies programs for the late Pablo Casals in Puerto Rico as Casals' first and only Professor of Percussion. Performed with distinguished jazz and pop artists, and as solo timpanist and/or principal percussionist with many orchestras, including the NYC Opera and the Festival Casals Orchestra. Also held professorships in Puerto Rico and CUNY Brooklyn College.

Presently, involved in research at composing and performing in a variety of settings.

Photo by Rick Mattingly

"... WE'VE TAKEN VERY HARSH CRITICISMS FROM EACH OTHER. BUT THOSE CRITICISMS ARE ALWAYS GIVEN WITH LOVE."

any other musical group I've ever been in, whether it was a jazz group, symphony orchestra or studio band, there was *never* such a spirit of wanting to grow, and also, having around you the masters to help you grow. I think Mr. Waits is being very modest when he says that he doesn't know why he was asked to be in the group, because for years he's been a musician I've admired immensely. I think what he said really illustrates what I'm saying; that's the attitude of anyone who comes in here. They're willing to learn and they want to learn. And everybody here brings in something different. Mr. Mantilla brings, as he pointed out, Afro/Latin traditions. Mr. Brooks here brings in something so unique it almost defies language. He brings in a musical saw, he plays steel drums, he brings in such a unique dimension—apart from the technical factors, there's always so much distance to go within each idiom. Each man brings that in here, and no matter what you bring in, you've got to learn.

SF: Are you all learning the musical saw?

King: His musical saw is just an expression of something that's inside him, and *that's* what he communicates with us. That's what I mean by it being such a deep experience. It's not just somebody coming in here and skimming across the surface. It's a school, as I view it, that can go on infinitely.

Mantilla: Just to get into Mr. Brooks' thing will take me a lifetime, maybe. Let me hang out with him for a while. It's nothing where you can just say, "How do you do that?" He'll show me, but in the long run you've got to be with these people and see how they're playing, and we have to hear each other. So, like he says, it's an infinite thing; you keep growing and growing.

Waits: I don't know how long we were together before we made our first European trip, but as much as we had rehearsed here, and been on each other's case, and argued, and been through the growing pains, I think that trip *really* brought us together. It was a short trip, but we lived together for ten days. I can only speak for myself, but prior to that trip, I knew we had something to do, but it wasn't clear in my head. I was still grasping for what to write, and what to do when, and how to make this whole thing happen. By us being together, we began to get up at eight o'clock in the morning *together,* we began rehearsing from nine in the morning until six in the afternoon *together;* we began to get into what Brooks was doing with that saw *together.* At the end of that ten days, I think everybody felt, *"Now* I know what we are doing together. Now I know where we've got to go, and some of the steps we will have to take to get us there." That commitment, I think, came at that point. We went to Europe for the first time in '73, and we had been together for about two years. That trip really brought us up. It happened at the right time, because no matter how much we rehearsed and played here together, we had to get out and try it. We had to get out on that concert stage and see if it would work, and convince *ourselves* that we could do this. That trip did it. Everybody said, "Yes! We *can* do this. Let's get on the case a little harder now." This trip that we came back from recently really put it over again. I think we have rejuvenated ourselves. Every time we do something, we move to another level because it's like, "Okay, we've done *that,* now let's do something else." The whole thing is moving so each time there is something else to do. That's why we all feel that this is vast; it's limitless.

This is a very unique situation; something I think needs to be seen *and* heard, because it has so much to offer on so many levels—musically and aesthetically.

Mantilla: Excuse me, I've got a question. Have you guys seen M'Boom before?

RM: Today was the third time I've seen the group live.

Mantilla: Three times. Okay. It's important that you see it, you know? You too?

SF: Today was the first time I've seen the group live. But I saw M'Boom on TV about ten years ago.

Smith: Oh yeah, that thing on Channel 13. [New York Public Televi-

Photos by Charles Stewart

Ray Mantilla

Performed and recorded with Machito, Eddie Palmieri, Ray Barretto, Gato Barbieri, Charles Mingus, Art Blakey, Dizzy Gillespie, Marvin Gaye, Herbie Mann and others. Mr. Mantilla has his own albums on Inner City Records. He is currently working with his own group called Ray Mantilla with Space Station. The band will be recording in Europe. He also has a soon-to-be-released video tape of a performance at the NYC jazz club Lush Life.

Max Roach

One of the founders of modern jazz drumming. Since '72 has been Professor of Music at University of Massachusetts in Amherst, MA. Mr. Roach has appeared twice before in MD interviews. Once in Jan./Feb. '79, and again, in June '82.

Photo by Charles Stewart

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Waits: That was another thing that happened to M'Boom. I was doing the contracting for a show called *Soul,* and I was asked if I had any ideas for anything that would make a good presentation on that show. Immediately, I said "M'Boom." At that time, this thing had only been going for maybe a year and a half, and our whole concept hadn't totally formed yet. The concept of M'Boom as a form has evolved over the 12 years to the point where we are comfortable with each other and we could walk on the bandstand in any given situation and do what we think would be a good performance.

Musically about M'Boom, I'm sure Mr. Chambers probably could say some things about how we come about our arrangements, and how we project our . . .

Brooks: Musical concepts.

Chambers: Well, along with what you said about the phone call and all of that, I think Max wanted to get guys who were basically drummers—who had built their reputations as what we call set players—but who were also arrangers and composers and who were willing to explore the possibilities of percussion in order to develop a knowledge of percussion. That was the basic premise of M'Boom. Of course, there are individuals here who were already involved with total percussion, like Mr. Smith and Mr. King. They had a knowledge of mallet instruments and timpani and things like that, and were working professionally as percussionists. So it was a learning experience for the original six, learning the percussion family—vibraphone, marimba, xylophone, timps, various metal instruments, Latin percussion, and drumset, which we already played. So it was basically like a workshop for us. We came to this studio every Saturday and just played, feeling our way around, trying to figure out how we were going to develop this concept. It gradually developed with arrangements that we all brought in

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Warren Smith

Performs and records in all phases of African-American music plus Broadway shows, symphonies, television, and radio. Has worked with Aretha Franklin, Nat "King" Cole, Sammy Davis, Jr., Sam Rivers and many more. Mr. Smith teaches at the Slate University of New York at Old Westbury.

Freddie Waits

Performed and recorded with "Ivory Joe" Hunter, Percy Mayfield, Stevie Wonder, Sonny Rollins, Lena Home and others. Mr. Waits wasfeatured in a Colloquium III interview in the Feb. /Mar. '80 MD. In addition to his work with Horacee Arnold and Billy Hart in Colloquium III, Mr. Waits is currently leading his own group with varied instrumentation.

Eric Carr

THE KISS® OF SUCCESS

by Michael Epstein

In the summer of 1980, with the departure of original drummer Peter Criss, Kiss began a talent hunt that ended with the installation of Eric Carr in the drum chair. Unknown but far from inexperienced, he had served his musical apprenticeship, six sets a night for 10 years, on the Brooklyn/Queens club circuit. Possessor of an atomic backbeat, Eric was the perfect choice to power the Kiss unit in its bid to regain the fast lane of the music business, a position from which the band had noticeably slipped in recent years.

A consummate professional, Eric's orientation is geared toward the *music* rather than the attendant phenomenon of the band's image and the trappings of rock 'n' roll success. It's apparent that he hasn't forgotten his past and where he could have been, had he not been 1000% ready for Kiss.

The musical road that led Eric to Kiss from his native Brooklyn began in Liverpool. "Ringo.Il loved the Beatles," enthused Eric. "That's why I started playing drums. I was caught up in the whole Beatlemania thing. I guess I was attracted to the drums because of the feeling of the rhythm and how it moved you, just sitting in your seat.Il loved the way Ringo moved. I identified with him at the time because he was the nice guy in the band—the puppy dog. The one that's not so cute but every one loves him anyway."

Using Ringo as his model, Eric began teaching himself to play. "I set up right-handed like Ringo, but I was left handed. I figured this was the right way. My first set-up was a right-handed set of books! I got a different sounding book for each drum and I stamped on the floor for the kick. I put on I headphones and played with records, memorizing Beatle tunes. I got to where I could play what I wanted, off the radio and records." Eric's parents were extremely supportive, feeling that this was better than hanging in the streets. "When they saw that I was really interested and serious, they wanted to help me. My parents bought me a $175 Zimgar set, and I set them up exactly like Ringo. I was buying these cymbals from Czechoslovakia that cost a dollar an inch. After a week they'd be ruffled and I'd have to throw them away. Had I saved my money for good stuff, I'd have saved a lot of money, but I needed instant gratification.

"Once I started playing, I wanted to be like the Beatles—on records, in the movies, in the magazines, all of it. I felt that if I could get all this from the enjoyment of playing, this was what I wanted to do for life."

Kiss does seem a different breed of dream than the Fab Four. The instant recognition of the Beatles' faces versus the cloak of invisibility that shrouds the identity of Kiss is an ironic twist for someone who hungered for fame. "That's not quite true. When I joined Kiss, I knew what it was about. It didn't matter to me one way or the other. I was older and I loved the band on its own terms. It was unique—a great concept, a great stage show and, in a way, very much like the Beatles. You could always tell who was who on stage. Here are four guys, you know their faces and make-up and, like the Beatles, everyone has their own fans and a well-defined image. The group *and* the individuals in it have a following. It's not really faceless. So many groups are a sound with no personality. I love REO Speedwagon, but ask me to name someone in the group and I can't do it. Even though people don't know what I look like, they know my name and my character. Since I couldn't be in the Beatles, this is as great as it gets."

The move from tapping on books to smashing his first set of drums was not without its problems. Eric encountered the traditional drummer's nightmare: "I was in a two-family house. My first fear was, 'Where can I practice and not drive everyone crazy?' It was so loud! I drove everyone nuts playing in my room. Basically I re-taught myself what I had learned on the books. Once I got comfortable with how to do basic beats, little by little I tried fills. That brought me down to *zero* again. I realized how much I had to learn. So I listened carefully to fills and learned them one at a time, the simplest ones I could do. Eventually it came more naturally over a slow progression. I never thought about playing as loud as possible. Heavy metal was not in consideration in the mid '60s. All I wanted was to play the style I heard."

Eric's ambition was not to be satisfied with paint-by-numbers practice sessions. He wanted to play out. "My first band was a trio: drums, bass and rhythm guitar. One guy played bass on a regular guitar with the bass turned all the way up on the amp. It was typical for the time. We didn't have to be virtuosos then because all the songs were three and four chords. The material was Beatles, of course, and later, the Rascals, the Music Explosion, Classics IV and top-40 stuff. Our first gig was a family engagement party. Everybody was there and my grandfather got up at one point and played his trombone with us. But it was fun. The stage show was simple. My little set, two portable TV tables for the amps to roll around on and three mic's that shouted feedback as soon as you looked at them. This was the system for a long time. Wires that broke, amps that gave no kind of sound, always feedback, but great fun."

Graduating to the band which included his present brother-in-law, Eric began to move a little closer to the style he would embrace as his own, but not without the usual tears. "The guitar player put heavy reverb on everything, so no matter what we played, it sounded like the Ventures. We used to fight about it all the time. I was *so* into all the music happening that I would teach the guitar player all his parts because I was learning guitar at this time too. I also figured out the bass parts and sang lead, so I was really the leader of the band."

Singing was one more element that would make him something other than just another talented drummer, and it insured a home for him in Kiss as surely as did his drumming style. How did he begin singing? "I learned to sing and play at the same time. I'd practice beats and just naturally sing the words with the records. It's real hard to sing without playing drums because I don't breath the same. It's only this year that I've learned how to control myself so I get the same quality in my voice when I'm standing, for recording, as I can when I'm sitting and playing. When I'm playing, I'm breathing so heavily that my lungs are getting plenty of air and there's no restrictionI I can push. When I'm standing, I'm calm ,I1 don't breath as much and my pushing is restricted. I tried sitting at a mic' with sticks in my hand and I faked playing to see if I could get the right feel. It didn't work, but now it's better. It only took 15 years."

Jump back 15 years to young Eric showing up for his first club gigs on the back of his dad's delivery truck. "My dad was great. He'd pass by all these clubs and stop in and tell them, 'Hey, my son has a band.' He got us lots of auditions. His truck was perfect for the equipment. This was club work in Brooklyn and Queens. I was happy to be playing anywhere. I wasn't thinking about record deals at this time. I wanted the band to be the best it could be. We had a sign with the band name on it and we tried to get matching outfits to look more professional. We were always trying to get better equipment. I was looking to stay with them but it just petered out. One guy's father didn't want him to be playing music. In those days the sets were nine to three in the morning, six sets, 40 minutes on and 20 off. We worked hard. It felt like

Photo by Edward Przydzial/ECPI

years on stage every night."

After years of nights like this the musical winds shifted. In Eric's words, "I noticed things were progressing in a harder direction. As good as the Beatles stuff was, compared to the new stuff on the radio, it was staying pretty simple. I found myself wishing that the Beatles would do some hard stuff. I began to listen to other things."

Inspired by the intensity he was hearing, Eric formed a new band made up of bass, guitar and keyboard. "The keyboard player had this electric piano blasting through a big Acoustic amp. With a built in power booster he could drown out the *whole* band. I had to play hard and change my whole playing idea to keep up. I wanted to, though. Just before this band formed I heard a band play 'Sunshine of Your Love' and 'Purple Haze' for the first time. I died! I didn't want to get up on stage after them and audition with my band with our Beatles stuff. When I started listening to these records I heard double kick for the first time. The feeling of the heavy bottom weight that started to happen made me think more about using it too. This new band was originally a four-piece that went to a three-piece, doing Cream, Hendrix, some Fudge, Grand Funk and with a whole different approach to the rhythm section. There were complex bass and drum patterns playing against each other. Raunch and powerhouse playing was happening.

"Bonham came after Ringo for me. Zeppelin was lots of air, bare bones. Bonham above everyone was my main influence. It's not so strange to go from Ringo to Bonham. They were both simple players, really. He could do more with two snare beats than someone else could do with all kinds of fills and triplets and going around the whole kit. It's *where* he did it that made it count. He was a team player and Zeppelin was so tight as a band because everyone did just what was necessary with no frills."

Enter bass drum number two. "I mostly learned how to use double kick on the job. I'm really not that versatile on it. I use it very simply; standard stuff that's not too complex. I can hit single notes on the toms with the feet setting up a pattern underneath, or I do flams. I use it to break things up so there's more syncopation in there, like Bonham would do."

Working local clubs, Carr was shackled to the grindstone of economic necessity. "I've done it all. I was a cement worker with my father and I delivered refrigerators and washing machines up eight flights of stairs during the day and played at night. I was a file clerk and general slave at the Department of Criminal Justice Services. I worked in the deli department in a supermarket in Queens. I hated it. White shirt, hair in a pony tail, slicing the lox paper-thin for the old ladies. The last job that I was *still* doing before Kiss was as a gas range repairman. Things weren't doing well money-wise for my band, and my father started his periodic, 'Eric, aren't you starting to think about what's going to happen? You've been at this so long you really should do something else. You can make some money. Why don't you come out with me?' So I did and I was finally doing it on my own, repairing gas ranges all over Brooklyn and Queens."

Eric had handed in his notice to the four-piece unit he'd been rehearsing with for three months, not knowing what his next move would be. One night, depressed, he showed up at a local Queens club to hang out. Out of the blue, he ran into a keyboard player who'd already quit the same band Eric had given notice to. The keyboard player was invited to hear the band play the next night and, after the set, approached Eric with the future. "He said to me, 'Eric, you've got to get out of this band. You're not making any money. This is ridiculous. Why don't you audition for Kiss?' I said, 'Come on, don't tease me.' But he went on to say that Peter Criss was leaving the band and they were looking for a replacement. He saw the ad in a local paper. So, the next morning, I and another friend went and bought *Kiss Unmasked,* the newest album. I called up Aucoin Management and said, 'Hi, I'm Eric Carr and I want to audition for the band. What do I do?' The girl on the phone told me that I needed a tape and asked me things like did I sing, play double kick and had I been arrested before? They wanted a tape of me playing and singing, the most recent pictures that I had and a resume of what I'd done before. That was on a Thursday. I don't know what made me do this, but I let it sit. The next Monday was when I was supposed to have it in, but I brought it in on Tuesday. I was a day late. By the time I got home I had already gotten a call to come and meet Bill Aucoin on Wednesday. He gave me a list of songs to learn if I was picked for an audition. My hair was all frizzed out and I had a mustache. 'One thing I can tell you,' he said, 'is that you should get rid of the mustache before you even go.' So I did. I had all day Thursday to work on the songs and I came in Friday to audition. They called me back *again* when I got home from this to come in again the next day. By then I knew. I had the overwhelming vibe that I was going to get it. I got a call that the band wanted to rehearse with me on Monday and see how it goes. 'For all practical purposes you're in the band' they said. As far as I was concerned, this was it because I wasn't going to do *anything* to screw this up at all."

The auditions were made up of assorted drummer-types, from cool, studio professionals to the speed-rapping hopefuls falling off their new platform boots in the anxious attempt to *look* the part, if nothing else. The candidates were assigned audition shifts, but Kiss ran on rock 'n' roll time, and the large waiting room was backed up with auditionees. Each name that was called shot a bolt of fear through the remaining drummers. Some reappeared after only a few minutes, adjusting a crippled smile as they stumbled for the elevator. Some listened at the door as the competition revved up, and reported the fate of those on the hot seat to the waiting crowd. Most sat and thought their own thoughts.

Eric doesn't remember anything about the time in the waiting room. He was psyched for his main chance. When he first walked into the audition to meet the guys, he observed a video camera pointed at a huge, double kick set-up, a table in the back of the room groaning with gourmet snacks, and a few shadowy figures in the back of the room. "I spotted Gene right away. The only one I didn't recognize was Ace. Paul, to me, doesn't look that different without make up. I said hello to everyone and then my first concern was getting the drums together so I could play them. I blocked everything else out. Once I had set up, Gene asked me what I wanted to start with. I think we just went down the list of tunes. The usual questions, you know, 'Can you sing?' 'Yeah.' 'Did you learn

this?' 'Yeah, I learned it.' 'You gonna sing *Black Diamond?'* 'Yeah.' 'Can you sing the background in this and this?' 'Yeah, okay.' 'You want us to give you a harmony part?' 'Yeah, okay, sure.' It really happened that fast. I'd been singing leads and harmonies for so long that, in all honesty, it wasn't that much different than a normal rehearsal where you figure out who sings what part where. We did it with harmonies a couple of times and I felt real good about it—we blended right away. The only thing I thought would mess it up was if they were looking for a real hot-shot on the drums, which I didn't feel I was. I felt that I was *good and* that I could play the material and add stuff to it, if they weren't looking for real flash and technically great licks to go, say, five steps further than Peter. That was the only concern I had. I *knew* I could do everything that had to be done to help the group."

Out of the who-knows-how-many hopefuls, Eric got the nod. Why does he feel he was picked out of the throng? "They took me because they, obviously, liked how I played. I fit in. They liked my singing. I heard some of the tapes of people singing and they told me the stories about guys who couldn't sing at all or didn't even bother to.

"My attitude was real important. They didn't want anyone who thought he was hot stuff. There was a guy strutting around the auditions who later became a semi hot-shot with a group. He showed up with his brother pushing an Anvil case and acting like he owned the place. He *was* a great drummer but attitude-wise he would have never worked out with the band because he would have been wanting to get too fancy and overpowering where it's not necessary. I saw him after I got the Kiss job and he had gotten another job. He was doing alright, you know. I went over to him to congratulate him and introduce myself. It was like he didn't give a damn. Then, in an interview with this English heavy metal magazine, he said, 'I don't think I could ever enjoy being in Kiss "cause of the anonimity—people not knowing who I am. The other day I met the drummer from Kiss in a shopping mall. The guy came over to me and I didn't know who the hell he was.' I read that and it hurt my feelings. I went over to the guy to try to be nice and he had to be pissy."

"I'VE HEARD LOTS OF SOLOS BY GUYS THAT WERE GREAT, BUT DRUM SOLOS TEND TO GET BORING ..."

In keeping with band policy, Eric's past is as erased as it can possibly be. While admitting that he sometimes feels like someone out of the movie *The Man That Never Was,* he explained the reasons he can't tell the names of his former bands. "If I tell the names of the bands, people who knew them would know who I was. There are pictures of me in my previous life, and my real name *is* Eric Carr, but only a few people really know what I'm doing now. It was a policy that existed before I came into the band, and I stick with it.

"The advantage of make-up is that I can walk down the street unnoticed when I want. You *can* get the attention if you want. You can have someone call ahead somewhere and tell them that 'Eric Carr of Kiss is coming in, get him a nice table,' and they all know you're coming blah, blah, and you get treated nice and people look at you, but so what? I began to learn that everything is relative in life. I mean you can rehearse in Queens for a few bucks and the equipment is always breaking down, or go to New York City and the expensive equipment is just as bad. But the change in my life was obviously huge. I think if I hadn't been at this so long it would be different. My attitude was always to play every gig as if it were Madison Square Garden, long before I was in Kiss. I didn't want anyone to go home and say I was terrible. If they didn't like me, at least I knew I did my best. I always wanted to be in a super band and when I got with Kiss, mentally, I'd been in the band for years. When it did happen I almost knew what it would be like. But, to play in front of 45,000 people is *not* something you can imagine. It's astounding. It's more nerve-wracking to see the stadium in daylight, before the gig that night, and see the number of seats that will be filled than it is to actually play the gig. Once the lights go on you can't see anything but the first 30 rows.

"I do get nervous. In Melbourne, Australia was the only time I was sick from stage fright. The first Kiss gig was at the Palladium in New York City. My whole family was there but they didn't go back

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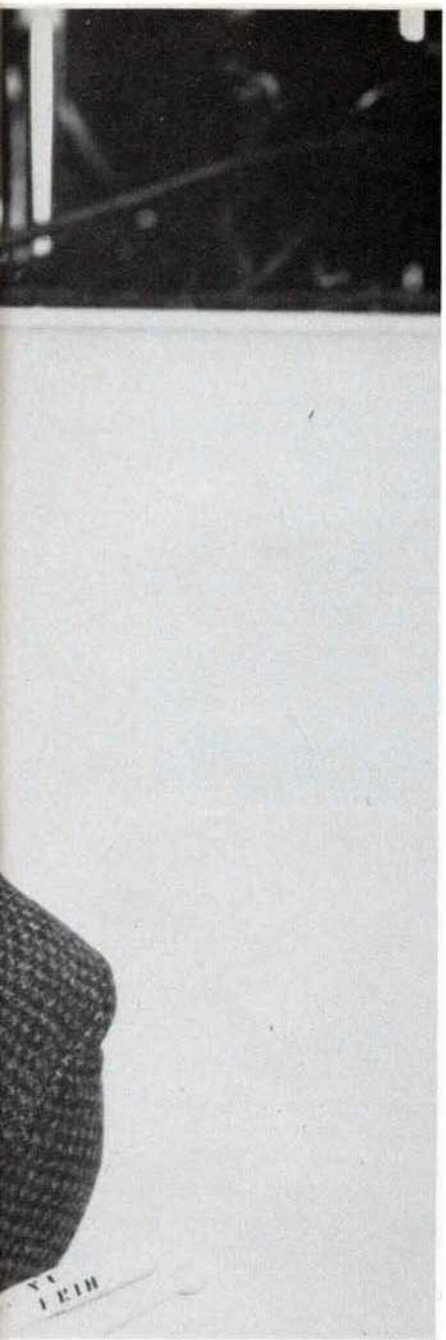
Photo by Sam Emerson

Denny Carmassi

It was a move that surprised some observers. Native San Franciscan Denny Carmassi was selected in May of 1982 to replace seven-year veteran Michael Derosier as drummer for the Seattle-based rock group, Heart. But Carmassi's swarthy, creative style of drumming proved almost tailor-made for Heart's Wilson-Ennis-Wilson songwriting team and band member Howard Leese's meticulous arrangements.

This came as no surprise to other observers, given Denny Carmassi's lifetime commitment to his art. "He was brought into the band simply because he's a good musician, " emphasized Heart lead vocalist Ann Wilson. In the studio this year, Carmassi's drumming melded perfectly, almost effortlessly, with the new, harder-edged material tracked for Heart's current album, Passionworks. *Songs like "(Beat by) Jealousy" and "Sleep Alone, " both penned by Ann Wilson and Sue Ennis, and Nancy Wilson's ' 'If I Have to Ask" called for a clean, rhythm-centered approach, and Carmassi delivered just the right kind of rock sensibility Heart had been looking for since its last two recorded efforts. Indeed, Carmassi's reputation as a slugger can only be overshadowed by the acute tastefullness of his playing—he listens, and he listens well. Heart's music has always been earmarked by impeccable craftwork and a heightened sense of interplay, and the unusual combination of drums Carmassi uses (resonant, non-resonant and electronic) coupled with his exceptional technical work allows him to establish a hot groove and yet blend perfectly with the other players to create the tight feel commanded by each tune. "We never*



HEARTBEAT

by Elizabeth Shaw Green

have to drag what we want out of him because he's sensitive to the subtle style changes in the different songs that we play, "says Heart guitarist Nancy Wilson. "It's a whole new sound for us, and we're just letting it flow. "

Dennis Carmassi was born 35 years ago into a household where drumming is still revered. His boyhood memories are filled with scenes of his father, Joe (a well-known drummer on the San Francisco circuit during his lifetime), rehearsing with a series of local bands in the Carmassi family home. Because of his father's love for big band sounds, Denny developed a quick appreciation for jazz music of the 1950s—he still numbers Ted Heath and early Ray Charles records among the favorites in his collection. But by age 10, Denny and his younger brother Billy (who now drums for the group AIdo Nova) had clearly converted to rock 'n' roll.

ESG: When did you first start playing drums?

DC: It seemed like I could always play. My dad allowed me to play on his set whenever I wanted. But there was no pressure to play so I never really took it seriously. I never thought about being in a band until I was 17 or 18. I was more into sports. I played baseball since I was about eight. That's what I wanted to do until I realized I was too small for major league play.

ESG: Describe the first kit you owned.

DC: An old Ludwig with gold sparkles. I wish I still had it today! It was real basic: snare drum, one tom, bass drum, cymbal and a hi-hat. And I added a floor tom. I had that kit for a long time. I played it in club bands and stuff.

ESG: How did you first finance your drum habit—money from an outside job, your parents . . .?

DC: My mom and dad bought me my first kit. But after that I did it myself by playing. I was playing in night clubs—I played in all the topless joints in San Francisco when I was 18 and 19. In fact, I even got busted for being under age—you had to be 21 at the time. But I saved my money and bought what I wanted.

ESG: What was your first combo gig like?

DC: This girl that I knew—vaguely knew—knew that I played drums. She knew some guys in a band, and their drummer was being drafted or something. They were auditioning drummers, so I played a nightclub with them and got the gig. It was the first time ever that I played with a band. And it was the first time that I realized, "Wow, this is really fun," and that I could make a living at it.

ESG: When you started to get serious about playing, did you take any formal lessons?

DC: No. The only real formal lessons I had, I guess, were when I was in junior high school. I played in the orchestra, and I played the timpani. I sort of learned how to read then, although I'm not a great reader. But I never took lessons from a teacher.

ESG: Did you work with any method books?

DC: I went through *Stick Control and Accents and Rebounds.* For me, that pretty much covered it.

ESG: You use matched grip instead of the traditional method. What made you adopt that style?

DC: The main reason was for power. There's more power in playing matched grip. But I learned how to play in the traditional way, and there are certain styles I can play better traditionally—like jazz, for instance—than I can matched.

ESG: Did you ever get much into drumming styles other than rock?

DC: I like to *listen* to them. I listen to all that music. I was really a big fusion fan for a long time. I still listen to a lot of Tony Williams' stuff, and Bill Bruford and Jan Hammer. I listen to that for enjoyment, when I'm at home. But I like to think of myself as a versatile player.

ESG: Did you ever like to experiment much with time signatures?

DC: Not until recently. I have been for my own curiosity, at home in my drum room. I've got a drum machine and headphones, and things I can practice with by myself so I can work stuff out. I also have a set of Calato practice pads. And they're quiet!

When I first moved into my new house, I had a Remo practice set. I like to practice at night—that's when I get the urge—but the Remo pads always made that "clickety-clickety" sound. So one day I was outside and my neighbor came by and said, "What do you do? Are you a tap dancer?"

ESG: Do you play other percussion instruments?

DC: Just the timpani. And I have a set of conga drums at home that I goof around on.

ESG: Do you keep up with the timpani playing at all?

DC: No. I haven't done it since I was playing with Ronnie Montrose. We made a tape for the opening of the show, with this whole big synthesizer production, and I played the timpani on that. That was a gas!

ESG: Do you play any other instruments?

Photo by E. Shaw Green

DC: Just a little guitar.
ESG: Do you think that keyboard knowledge and a good melodic sensibility is important to drumming?
DC: Yes. If I had students, I'd make them take keyboard first, before they started on drums. I would also make a child take dance lessons, especially tap dancing, just for the coordination.
ESG: What drummers did you emulate when you were a kid?
DC: Well, the way that I really taught myself how to play drums was by listening to records and playing along with them. I listened a lot to the *Green Onions* album by Booker T. and the MGs. And Al Jackson was my favorite drummer. I used to go in the back room and put the stereo on real loud and play to these records. I'd figure out what they were doing and how they were doing it. That's how I taught myself.
ESG: What drummers do you admire now?
DC: Tony Williams has been a long-time favorite . . . Bill Bruford —I think he's incredible! Alex Acuna is great. And Phil Collins is a really fine drummer.
ESG: What groups did you play with before Heart?
DC: I started playing in '73 with the band Montrose—Ronnie and Sammy Hagar. It was my first major band, and it broke up in about '77. Ronnie did his solo album, and I went to play with Sam for about a year. I did a couple of albums with him—a live album and a studio album in England.

I left Sam and started a band with Derek St. Holmes from the Ted Nugent group. It was a short-lived band; we did one album for Warner Brothers. Then I went to England and played with Michael Schenker. I was going to do an album with Michael, but he got really sick and went in the hospital. I came back to the States, and Ronnie called me up to do the group Gamma. So rather than wait around for Michael—I didn't know if he was going to do the album or what—I went with Gamma for a couple of years, until Heart.
ESG: How did you connect with Heart?
DC: I was doing the Randy Meisner album *Playing in the Deep End,* and Howard [Leese, Heart's lead guitarist and keyboardist] was the guitar player. We got to know each other—we did the whole album together—but it really came out of the blue.
ESG: Did Howard mention to you at any point that Derosier was going to leave?
DC: Well, yeah . . . I sort of knew. Howard had asked me in January of 1982 that, if such and such happened, would I be interested in playing with Heart.
ESG: Were you very familiar with Heart before the offer?
DC: Not really, other than what I had heard on the radio. Just the hits.
ESG: What is the power structure in Heart?
DC: Basically, Nancy [Wilson, guitarist] and Ann [Wilson, lead vocalist] are the songwriters, and Howard more or less leads the band.
ESG: He seems to be the real technical pulse of the band, given his background in arranging and music theory.
DC: Yeah, Howard's a real good musician. He, Ann and Nancy have been together for a long time. He's good at translating their ideas into music.
ESG: I presume then that you're comfortable with the arrangement?
DC: Oh yeah, totally. They give me free rein. They've never said, "You have to play this way." I can interpret the songs whichever way I want, which is really great. I just have to cop the groove of the song.
ESG: What do you like most about playing with Heart? I find that there's a lot of stylistic variety in the songwriting, and that's something that would attract me.
DC: Yeah, I like the different types of music that they do. There's the hard rock stuff, and there's the ballad stuff. Their audiences are very appreciative, and that continues to blow my mind every night. It's a different crowd of people than what I've been used to in other bands. I've been used to more of like a heavy-metal type of headbanger crowd in the other bands I've played in. The Heart audience is real appreciative—they listen. And that is great.
ESG: What do you feel you contribute to Heart's sound that's different from what Derosier put out?
DC: I'd hate to compare. I think our styles are different, but that's for other people to analyze.
ESG: Do you like the musical direction Heart is heading in now?
DC: Well... I wasn't involved in their last album, so I don't really know what direction they're trying to pursue. But I like what they're doing now. They're very talented.

What's going to come out is going to come from the songwriters. You can't really push a direction. When you get five people together, it sounds a certain way; when you replace two of the people, it will sound different. It's going to go whichever way it goes by itself.

ESG: Rock 'n' roll traditionally is pretty much of a male stomping ground. Does it bother you that in this band two women are the main attractions?

DC: Oh, no! They're good musicians. A good musician is a good musician, whether it's male, female, or whatever. Music is music.

ESG: But don't you think men have it easier than women in the music business overall?

DC: Yeah, it must be true that they do have it easier. I guess it's always been a male-dominated industry.

ESG: So do you think that as a man who plays the drums you generally had it easier than women who play drums, in terms of getting gigs and having people take you seriously as a player?

DC: I'm sure that's true. I'm sure there's a real prejudice; an underlying prejudice.

ESG: Describe the gear you use onstage with Heart.

DC: I'm using a 24 x 16 Tama bass drum and a 6 1/2 x 14 Tama *Bell* Brass snare. I *use five Remo Roto-Toms*—8", 10", 12" and two 14" sizes—and I have two 6" Dragon Drums, which I really like. I also have a set of Simmons SDS-5 electronic drums, which are just fantastic! A lot of guys in Europe use them. Before I joined Heart, I went to Europe for six weeks with Gamma—we did a Foreigner tour—and I really got turned on to them over there. When I went back to Europe with Heart, I got 'em. They're just . . . man, they're amazing! And I haven't even really had a chance to get into them. Because of the way we tour, we hardly ever soundcheck anymore. We just go up and play. But the Simmons are really cool.

ESG: Pitchwise, how are you tuning your drums?

DC: I usually tune the *Rotos* to B-A-G-E-D. I like that tuning. The *Rotos* really cut through the band. The Simmons I try to fit in around the *Rotos,* but I don't really tune those to any note.

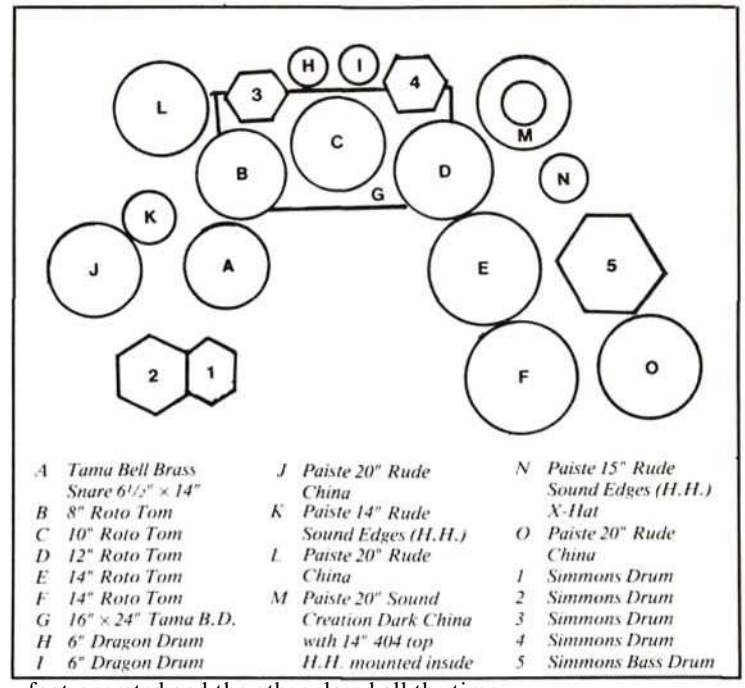
As for the Dragon Drums, I don't tune those to a specific note either. I just go by tension. But I do like to tune them to a high pitch so they can cut hard, like the *Rotos.*

ESG: What cymbals do you use?

DC: I use Paiste cymbals. I have two 20" *Rude* Chinas—those are great cymbals. I used to break cymbals like you wouldn't believe! I have a stack in my basement of like 50 or 60 broken cymbals. I used to break *2002s* at the rate of about one every week and a half.

So I got a Paiste endorsement, and used *Rudes* all through the Heart and Gamma tours. I haven't broken one yet, and they're great for rock.

I also have a 20"*Rude* crash cymbal, a set of 15" *Rude* hi-hats, and a set of 14"*Rude* hi-hats. I've been playing two hi-hats—one foot-operated and the other closed all the time.



A	Tama Bell Brass Snare 6½" × 14"	J	Paiste 20" Rude China	N	Paiste 15" Rude Sound Edges (H.H.) X-Hat
B	8" Roto Tom	K	Paiste 14" Rude Sound Edges (H.H.)	O	Paiste 20" Rude China
C	10" Roto Tom	L	Paiste 20" Rude China	1	Simmons Drum
D	12" Roto Tom	M	Paiste 20" Sound Creation Dark China with 14" 404 top H.H. mounted inside	2	Simmons Drum
E	14" Roto Tom			3	Simmons Drum
F	14" Roto Tom			4	Simmons Drum
G	16" × 24" Tama B.D.			5	Simmons Bass Drum
H	6" Dragon Drum				
I	6" Dragon Drum				

ESG: Do you have any hardware that you really love?

DC: Yeah. I've got a great Sonor hi-hat stand—it's from their *Signature* set—that's fantastic.

ESG: Fast?

DC: Yeah, and real sturdy. It's just a real solid piece of equipment.

ESG: What about your bass drum pedal?

DC: I've been using chain-drive pedals for years. I got turned on to Ippolito pedals in 1973 or '74. Now I use Tama chain-drive pedals.

For drum heads I use Remo rough coat *Emperors* on my snare. In the studio I usually use rough coat *Emperors* all the way around if I'm using regular drums, as opposed to the *Roto-Toms.* I really like the sound of *Emperors* on them. When I do use the *Roto-Toms,* I put clear *Emperor* heads on them.

ESG: Tell me about Heart's new album.

DC: Well, we started recording it in late March of this year. We planned it for a summer release so we could have a nice big tour and go back to Europe and maybe Japan. Summer's a nice time to have an album out.

Keith Olsen produced it for us at Good Night L.A., his studio in Los Angeles. The material is rock—no doubt about it. It's a lot different than the last album. It's real straight ahead, and not as experimental.

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"... YOU CAN'T BE STRICTLY A TIMEKEEPER. YOU HAVE TO BE CREATIVE WITHIN THAT FRAMEWORK."

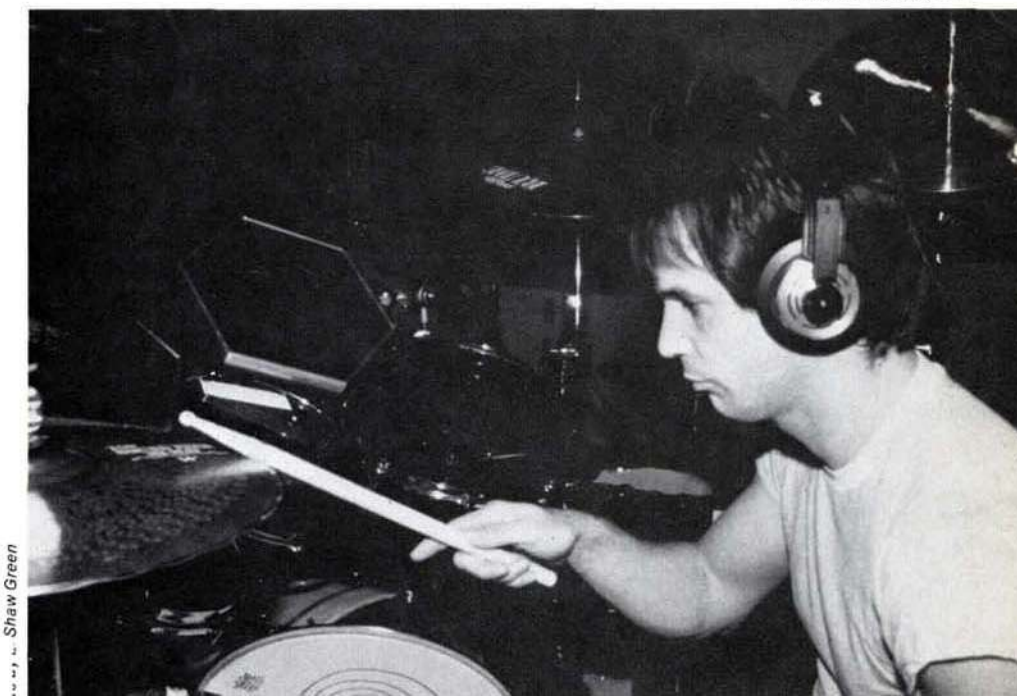


Photo by Shaw Green

INSIDE

Photo by Lissa Wales

Roy Burns is internationally known as a drummer, clinician, and author. For many years he served as drum consultant to the Rogers drum company. Dave Donohoe also worked for Rogers, and although his name is not as universally known, his influence as a design engineer has been felt by almost every drummer performing today, since he is responsible for Rogers' revolutionary Memri-Loc *hardware system, which has since been incorporated into almost every drum company's hardware.*

Together, Roy and Dave are now the driving force behind Aquarian Accessories, a company dedicated to providing innovative, high-quality accessory items to serve the needs of today's drummer.

The offices and assembly operation of Aquarian Accessories currently share space in Anaheim California with Aquarian Coatings, an industrial powder-coating business operated primarily by third partner Ron Marquez. Rick Van Horn had an opportunity to visit with Roy and Dave, tour the facility, and share the views of these two dedicated men on the state of today's drum industry, and what Aquarian Accessories has to offer the drum consumer.

RVH: At what date did you actively begin the operation of Aquarian Accessories?

RB: We've been in business since June of 1980.

RVH: You've come quite a way in that time.

RB: We really have, because we own three patents now.

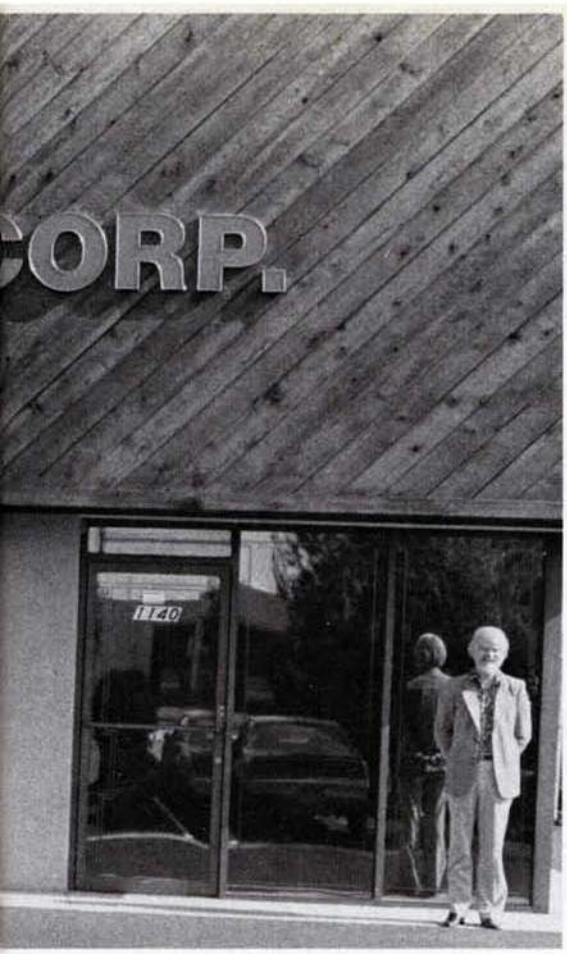
RVH: What was your first item?

RB: We started out with the *Cymbal Spring;* the one with the wire clip on the top. We later found out that it just wasn't strong enough to hold up, so we re-designed it into the Heavy-Duty one, and now we have the Super one out, which is for Chinese cymbals or big ride cymbals, or mounting a pang cymbal upside down. The next product was our *Kwik-Key.* Then the *Formula X-10* drumsticks. The next thing was the *Formula X-10 Lites* with graphite, which I think up to this date is the best stick we've made. We're in the process of re-designing the *Formula X-10* stick to improve some things there. We try to keep refining each product as we go along. I don't care how much field testing you do, you're never sure exactly how a product is going to hold up or be received until you get out in the marketplace. Then you have to be honest enough that when a guy calls up with a complaint, you say, "Tell me all about it; send the part back to me. Let me see what I can do." Most people are surprised when I answer the phone because they see the ads and they think I'm *endorsing* Aquarian Accessories. When I answer the phone they say, "Gee, do you work there?" and I say, "Well, sort of. I'm one of the owners." That helps a lot in working out problems, because no product is perfect.

RVH: Are these tables I see here the whole assembly line?

RB: Our warehouse in Norco, California is where we have all of our heavy equipment;

AQUA



where do we do our molding and some of the other things that we sort of keep to ourselves. Some of the initial work on the cymbal spring is done there too. But all of the final assembly and shipping we do here.

RVH: What about the leather work for the cymbal bags?

RB: We also do that in Norco.

RVH: I'm a little disappointed that I couldn't view your molding operation, which must be unique.

RB: We have so much invested; we have some special techniques that we use. I hate to sound like the Zildjian company—I mean, they say they have secret manufacturing techniques. I used to be a little bit suspicious of that, truthfully, but I now recognize the need for it, because once you get that much money involved .... I mean, to the average drummer reading *Modern Drummer,* to see a picture of a machine means nothing, but that's our customer, not our competition. An engineer can look at the same photo and maybe pick up something. So we've decided we're sworn to secrecy.

RVH: Your personal reputation is that of a performer, author and drum authority. Dave Donohoe is a notable design engineer. But now you're both executives running a sizeable manufacturing business. What are some of the problems you've faced making that identity transition?

RB: I'll tell you what our biggest need was—for Dave and me. When you've been involved in product development in a major corporation, you never see the product from its inception, through the research, through the field testing, to the actual manufacturing, to the delivery to the store into the hands of the customer. Now Dave and I, when we worked at Rogers, we learned a great deal there; it was a valuable experience and we probably couldn't have gone into business without that experience. But it was frustrating at times to start out with an idea and see it get "committee-ized." You start with what is a fairly simple idea to answer the need of a drummer, and by the time it comes out the other end of the funnel, all these other people, who may or may not be close to the musician, have had suggestions, and it comes out to be something quite different than what you started with. Whereas, the idea of a smaller company, like we are, is that we can start out with an idea and see it all the way through to the end.

RVH: Give me an example of such an idea.

RB: Every one of our products comes in a display box. They all go on the counter, or under the counter, in such a way that the top folds up; there's always information on them. I think that's been one of the key things in our success. Our drumsticks, for instance, go up on the counter, not back in that bin where everything gets lost. Same thing with the springs—people see them. One of your problems in a music store is visibility; stuff gets buried because there's so much stuff in there. You have to have a way of getting your message through.

RVH: One way is to go out into the field with your product. Do you do that?

RB: We have products in clubs all the time; Dave is out quite often, like testing our new miking system; having guys try our sticks in clubs and timing the number of hours they have on them. We try never to overstate the durability of the sticks, for instance, because I don't want to get in that position of not being taken seriously. I'd rather understate it and let the guy try it and say, "Hey, it's even better than they said," than to make some outrageous claim and then not live up to it. Don't ever say something is unbreakable, because that's like issuing a challenge. All the karate experts come out of the woodwork and say, "I can break that; give me a chance." We're not really trying to design unbreakable stuff, we're trying to design stuff that satisfies a need. When you walk into a music store and there's your product, and your packaging, and everything's there and some guy's buying a cymbal spring or a pair of drumsticks . . . that's neat. You've lived with it through the entire design process.

RVH: Let's talk about the process that culminated in the *X-IO* synthetic sticks.

RB: That was really something. I think Dave and I finally looked at each other one time and Dave said, "If this doesn't work, I give up." We tried *everything*—different formulas; different ideas.

DD: First of all, when we were thinking of doing the drumstick, in order not to infringe on anyone's ideas I had to ask for a patent search to be done, and pull all the patents concerning drumsticks. They have been trying to make synthetic drumsticks since 1946. I had a chance to look at everything that's been done, then exhaust some avenues that I wanted to try—some ideas that hadn't been done—and hardly anything works. I mean, to get the feel, weight, rigidity and durability all in one package is almost impossible. A wood stick doesn't even have that. It's got the right weight and the right feel, but it only lasts a night or two. It lacks a major characteristic. To get all that, as close as possible, it took six months of research, and then another six months just to keep improving on it.

RB: I think our best stick at the moment is the *X-10 Lite* with graphite. This probably answers all those needs better than any other stick.

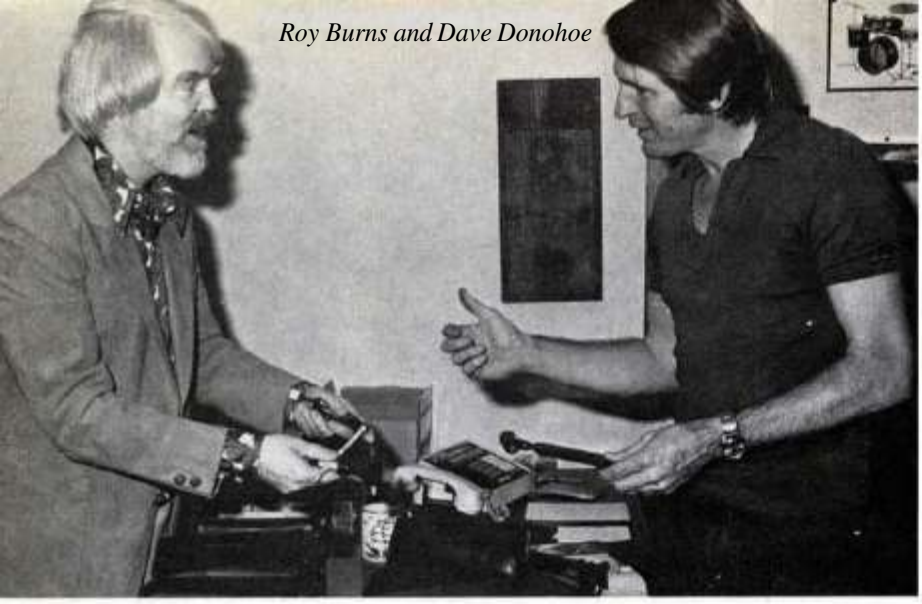
DD: Did you know we actually had to develop our own material for that? The materials that were available always lacked some major point. So we asked the company if they would be interested in developing a material for us. That's why it takes so long to get it; it's a special material and they have to make it specially for us.

RVH: Can you elaborate on any of the components for those who have not seen the sticks?

RB: I can give you some idea without giving away our whole idea. We use a nylon base, and then we add other synthetics to it. Graphite is one that we use for the *X-10 Lites,* and then we discovered in the course of experimentation that graphite by itself

RIAN

by Rick Van Horn



Roy Burns and Dave Donohoe

Photo by Lissa Wales

doesn't quite do it. It's stiff, but not tough enough. We discovered from our *Formula X-IO* sticks, which is a nylon base with other synthetics, that we could combine various synthetics with graphite into virtually a new formula. And that's how we've been able to do some of the things we've done.

DD: The toughest nylon known to man is called "Super-Tough" nylon. It's got a very high impact strength. But the unfortunate thing is that as soon as you put fillers in it, the impact strength goes way down. So we were thinking that what we really needed was a special nylon that had a high impact to begin with and when you added fillers it would *improved.* There was nothing like that. As soon as you put in graphite or other synthetics it degrades it. So we actually had to develop a nylon base that had a high impact and then, as you filled it, it got better. There are companies that would probably pay us more to use our material than we make with sticks.

RVH: This is in conjunction with a chemical lab?

DD: Right.

RVH: So now you have yourself set up in terms of your operation, and your source of material. You mentioned that you've already made design changes, and that there was a long period of time involved with the molding process and the design of the molds.

DD: Oh, the molds! Where we really ran into trouble was: I'm not a mold designer, I'm an engineer who designs the product. I have to leave it up to the mold designers to design the molds. The way we were running the first stick with the core in it was a whole new baby; nobody had ever seen a core that long before lying in a mold with tons of pressure coming around it. This guy designed a mold that cost us a lot of money, but it wouldn't work. It was a piece of junk, but they kept telling us, "It's your material. We can't run this material in that mold." And we said, "Look, we *have* to use this material; it's the only material that works. You *make* the mold work with that material." So after investing a lot more money, it turned out to be a scrap tool—thousands of dollars worth of junk. So just from the experience I gained through watching this mold grow through six months and trying to get sticks out of it, I said, "I'll design it." And then we got a mold that worked.

RB: We also brought in a mold consultant to tell us exactly where we were and if our ideas were correct. But what it meant was that refining process again. In this instance, not only had we re-designed and refined the sticks, we also had to re-design and refine the tooling and the molding. That's a very expensive learning process.

RVH: It also sounds like a lengthy process, but yet you've been in business less than three years.

RB: We were working on the sticks almost from the very beginning. Before we got to the stage of experimenting with materials we had designs and different ideas; we were doing lots of research. We were in a new area; nobody had ever made it work before. A good example of this kind of process would be Remo. -He not only had to come up with the plastic drum head, but then he had to invent a way to make it. And those two things overlap, because one without the other and you don't have a product.

DD: That synthetic stick was the most difficult thing I ever designed. I did *Memri-Loc,* which was a piece of cake compared to this.

RB: In the case of the sticks, you have to meet a complicated set of criteria: feel, sound, weight, balance, response, how it feels to your skin, all these things, and it's not easy to satisfy all those—although I feel we've done it better than anybody else.

DD: One thing I've learned about the laws of physics, and the drumstick is the perfect example: you take five properties that you *have to gel:* weight, strength, stiffness, tensile strength, and abrasion resistance (when you hit cymbals it has to not chip out easily), and when you take those five different properties, as you increase one, the other four lose. You can't increase this and increase that. As you increase flex, and get it stiffer, the stick becomes more brittle and wants to break easier. So then you back off of that, and as you gain in abrasion resistance so it really holds up, it becomes more flimsy. We have designed sticks that we don't keep around here anymore that would probably last a guy the rest of his life, but would totally destroy the drumset.

RVH: So the design process was a series of compromises?

RB: Arriving at a balance. We discovered that finding a material, designing a stick, and having a guy make you a mold, was not going to solve the problem. We had experts telling us the way to do it, and we did what the experts told us except it didn't work. And so out of necessity, we discovered ways to make certain things work. The hardest thing in any project is the completing. It's like being in a football game . . . it's easy to drive 90 yards, but the last ten are so much tougher. And that's really what it was like for us.

RVH: At almost the same split second you came on the market, there were Duraline, Hi-Skill and Riff-Rite. Why so many at the same time?

RB: The need was there, and we were not the only guys to recognize it. What will make the difference is how you try to satisfy that need. That means the material you use; how you design the stick; whether or not it can be made easily and quickly enough to make it feasible businesswise. And then I think that the thing that will really make the difference in the long run is how the company conducts itself on a day-to-day basis; how it does business. When we get a note from somebody that there was a drumstick that failed for some reason, I call the guy up, whether it's a music dealer or a consumer. I say, "Look, if it's our fault I want to see it. Send it back to me and I'll check it out. If it's our fault I'll give you a new one. If it's not our fault I want to tell you why I think it isn't our fault, but at least you're going to get an honest look, and you're going to talk to someone inside the company who's concerned about your problems."

I had one guy call me who bought a pair of sticks and the nylon tip came off. That was one of our biggest problems. So now we've changed our whole molding operation. It meant re-doing all the molds again, so that now we mold the *Formula X-lOs* all in one piece. Well, this guy had bought a pair of sticks—and $27.50 is a lot of money—and the tips came off during the first night. So he called up here very angry and I said, "Well, take it easy. Just tell me what happened." He did, and then I said, "Let me send you some extra tips, with instructions how to put them on." He said, "That'd be great, "and later on I got a real nice letter from him. He had bought another pair of sticks that were molded all in

Dave, Roy and Ron Marquez

one piece. I think it was the attitude he encountered when he called. I can remember calling up a company, with some disagreement over a product, and some guy says, "That's not my department," or "Let me transfer you to customer service," or "The guy who takes care of that's not here today. Leave your number and I'll have somebody call you back." Whenever you hear those statements, you can usually be assured that you're not going to get called back, that you're going to get fluffed off, and if you don't start screaming, you won't get any attention. So what we try to do is make sure the customer *gets* attention, and that we take care of the product.

RVH: From a manufacturing standpoint, one of the advantages of a wood stick is that you can put a new guide into the lathe and for a few dollars you can have a new stick model. With your molding process, a new stick model might represent thousands of dollars of production costs. How can you be competitive in terms of stick variety faced with that overhead problem?

RB: What we did in the first place was go to all the music stores—Dave has his micrometer—and pull all the most popular brands. We found out that there are two fundamental diameters in every drumstick sold for a drumset: *5A* and 55. They're all within thousandths of those two diameters. All that changes is length and the tip shape. Now there are drummers who use a very light stick, like a *7A* stick, but I'd say 80% of your sticks fall into a *5A* or *5B* diameter, and a similar length.

But we can make new sizes more easily, anyway, now that we have our mold completed. In order to come out with new sticks we just need to make new caddies. The original problem was perfecting the molding procedure, the process; that was the killer. Now that we've perfected that, we can come out with as many new models as we want to and it doesn't cost that much.

RVH: Even though you've managed to get the weight down with the *X-IO Lites,* I've still heard some complaints about their being too shoulder-heavy; too much impact and not enough rebound. How do you answer that?

DD: Roy and I had to decide who we were really designing this stick for. Who's going to use it? Forget the jazz players—they don't need it. It's the drummers that are bustin' up the sticks! And that's why we have a short taper—a heavy neck—because it's going to be used hard. That's why it's like that. It's not for everybody.

RB: After all, most sticks break in the neck. And we had logo for the first 80% of the market first. And at that time we were not sure how thin we could make a stick, or how long we could make the neck, and still provide a stick that was durable enough to justify the price. It costs us just as much to make a thin stick as a thick one. But part of the problem is a lot of drummers have been playing with a stick that has so little weight in front that they've developed a technique for using it. This comes up a lot. I get calls that ask, "If I use your sticks will I get 'tennis elbow'?" My answer to that is you can watch Jimmy Connors or Bjorn Borg play. Connors uses a metal racket, Borg uses a wood racket. Other pros use graphite rackets. And there's not one professional tennis player who ever comes down with "tennis elbow." Only your weekend amateurs get "tennis elbow" because they don't know how to use a racket. If you learn how to hit a tennis ball properly, you don't get "tennis elbow." In the drum world, they've got very heavy, cast rims on drums now, and drummers are using oversize drumsticks, whether it's wood or synthethic, and when a guy hits the backbeat, he hits it so all that shock goes right up his arm. And then he says, "Gee whiz, I think maybe these synthetic sticks are causing problems for me." No. It's only the technique. It can *only be* the technique, otherwise the top players would have the same problem, and you notice that they don't. It's always the amateur players because they're the ones with the biggest technical problems.

RVH: But aren't they also your biggest market?

RB: Yes and no. You can't design a bad product just because people don't know how to use a good one. What you have to do is educate them.

RVH: A lot of people have gone broke saying that.

RB: I understand that, and we're not here to make the world follow us, we're only here to make sure they understand what we're trying to do. For instance, when you play with a stick that has a real thin neck on it, in order to get a solid sound out of the drum you have to squeeze approximately twice as hard as you do if it had a thicker neck and a shorter taper. If you *do* pick up a stick that has a shorter neck and a thicker shoulder, and you *still* squeeze twice as hard as you need to because that's what you're *used* to doing, then your hand takes all that shock. That's what I mean. I agree with Ed Shaughnessy's comment in an MD article a while back, when he said that 80% of the drummers playing today use a drumstick that's too light for the job they have to do. I've always used a stick that was almost twice as heavy as people think I use, because I don't have to work so hard. You can either figure out how to get the drumstick to do as much work as possible, or you can get a drumstick that allows *you* to do as much work as possible. I was always of the style of trying to find a way to do it with the least amount of physical effort.

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Final assembly and packaging

Photo by Lissa Wales

Fred Below

Photo by D. Shigley

MAGIC MAKER

by Scott K. Fish

Sometimes it seems as if people have more regard for classic "things" than they do for classic people. An antique Radio King *snare drum, an antique K. Zildjian cymbal and a Billy Gladstone drumset would illicit floods of adulation from any half-informed drummer. Yet when it comes to appreciating and respecting, the genius, the ideas, the craftsmanship and the pioneering spirit of the founding fathers of the instrument, most people couldn't care less.*

Thai's so *backwards! Any drum, any cymbal and any collection of drumsets is only so much handcrafted wood, metal, calfskin and/or plastic. Period. Take the world's best drumset and cymbals, assemble them onstage and sit back in your chair. What happens? Nothing. You could rival Rip Van Winkle's nap waiting for magic to happen and it never would. Why? Because* people *are the magic makers. The evolution of equipment was based on sounds that* people *heard in their minds,*

and they wanted to create *those sounds. When we recall the genius of Gene Krupa do we say, "Oh yeah, Gene Krupa! Man, that guy had a great set of Slingerland's!"? No. We remember the sounds, we remember the music and we remember the* magic *of Gene.*

Fred Below was a magic maker, and I'm sure he still is. Back in the '50s, Fred stepped into the middle of a music that had no drumset players per se and had to make up his own rules for playing. In essence he created a drumset language for Chicago blues, a musical frontrunner to what became rhythm & blues and then rock 'n' roll. We hear of and read about the musical genius of Little Walter, Chuck Berry, Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Boy Williamson, Otis Rush, Junior Wells and Buddy Guy. And who would argue that without the input of their bandmembers we might not today be recognizing their musical genius? Below helped shape the music of all those musicians. And if people like Fred Below hadn't done what they did, we might never have had drummers like John Bonham and Neil Peart.

As recently as 1978, Dan Ackroyd and John Belushi put together a skit for Saturday Night Live *called The Blues Brothers, playing almost duplicate arrangements of the original blues tunes. The Blues Brothers became so popular that they filled stadiums all over the world, released three albums and a major motion picture.*

On the first album, Briefcase Full of Blues, *Ackroyd introduces the show: "Well, here it is, " he says, "the late 1970s going on 1985. Y'know, so much of the music we hear today is pre-programmed electronic disco. We never get a chance to hear master bluesmen practicing their craft anymore. By the year 2006, the music known today as the blues will exist only in the classical record departments of your local public libraries. "*

As tongue-in-cheek as that statement probably was, there's still a grain of truth to it. Many of the old blues records are disregarded as no longer having relevance. Some people won't listen to them simply because the fidelity wasn't up to 1983 standards. And the swing and dynamics of the blues don't seem to be a necessary commodity in today's pop market. "Don't worry about playing with dynamics, man. We can correct that at the soundboard. Don't worry about being tasteful. We can drop fills in later on with an overdub. "

Even though there have been some fantastic innovations in drumming, when compared to the magic of players like Fred Below, it's like comparing a Van Gogh with one of those bullfight scenes, painted in shocking colors on black velure, that everyone's seen sold on a roadside or at a gas station. Yeah, it's still a painting, and yeah, it lakes a level of humanity to paint it, but . . .

Drummers like Casey Jones, Dino Alvarez, Ike Davis and Ray Allison are still carrying the blues torch in Chicago. Record companies like Alligator *are recording blues bands today that would make you dance—the groove is so strong and magical—even if you were wearing cement shoes. While so many people are worrying about becoming "slick," these guys are playing with heart. Fred Below always played with heart. Like yesterday's innovators, tommorow's innovators will play with heart, because the heart is the center of the soul and the degree of soul a person has is in direct proportion to the degree of magic he creates.*

FB: I started back when I was going to DuSable High School in the early '40s. Two of my friends were Johnny Griffin and Eugene Wright. We all went to school at the same time. At that time I started playing trombone. Trombone wasn't my cup of tea, so I switched over to drums.

During my early life—much before that—I grew up around nothing *but* music. In the early '30s I used to go to the Vendome and the Regal Theater, the Metropolitan and places like that when I was a kid. I saw the best of the big black bands. They used to come through Chicago all the time. I saw Chick Webb and Gene Krupa. When I was going to high school and really getting interested in drums, I used to go to the Regal Theater and see Cab Calloway and Billy Eckstine and his big band. That band really turned me on.

SF: That was Art Blakey playing drums, right?

FB: Yeah, Art Blakey. Eckstine had all the big dudes then. Listening to them really enthused me and got me interested in it. I had a chance to see and hear all these different bands in person. Today you can't see some of the great bands. We used to go to the theater and sometimes sit through two or three different shows at the Regal. I can remember back just before I graduated seeing the Billy Eckstine Big Band just before they disbanded and Billy Eckstine went on his own. It was their last day in Chicago and all the kids from DuSable, Phillips and Englewood High Schools were in the theater. When Billy Eckstine got on the stage they stopped the performance. With the light turned on you could see that the theater was just full of kids. They even had the different teachers there from all the three different schools getting the kids out! That was one heck of a thing, man. This was just before bebop came out.

SF: How old were you when you saw Chick Webb?

FB: I'd say no more than 10.

SF: Did he impress you?

FB: Well, I wasn't interested in playing music, but I liked it. Billy Eckstine really impressed me and dawned on me what was happening.

SF: When did you decide you were going to be a professional?

FB: I was 14. My father supported me, but

Photo by D. Shigley

I was doing it on my own because all my friends like Eugene Wright and Johnny Griffin were already playing. I was hanging around with them at that time. I thought, "Well, if I'm going to hang around with *them,* I've got to do what they *do!"* So, I picked up an instrument too! *Then* I got interested in it.

SF: Were you able to practice drums in your house?

FB: Not so much. At that time you didn't practice on drums until you was able to play! I practiced on a practice pad. I didn't have a set of drums until I graduated DuSable in '44. I went into the Army in '45. When I went in the Army I was in the infantry and I couldn't continue my music. I practiced on helmet liners, helmets, boxes and things like that. When you're in the infantry there's no way to get in the band. While I was at Fort McClellan, Alabama, I saw Tommy Potter the bass player, and then Prez [Lester Young]. I had an opportunity to sit in and play with them.

I went overseas to the South Pacific and came back to Chicago in '46. All of the guys that I knew were gone out of town, man. I went to the Roy C. Knapp School.

SF: Did you have a music teacher when you were in high school who taught you how to read?

FB: Oh yeah. DuSable High School had one of the best teachers. That was Capt. Walter Dyer. That's where I learned my music. At the Knapp School I met Wilbur Campbell, Marshall Thompson, Elgie Edmonds and Odie Payne. There were drummers down there by the dozens.

SF: Can you tell me about the Roy Knapp School?

FB: That was a school where, even though you knew the rudiments when you went in, they taught them to you again to make sure that you knew what you were doing. They had sightreading and music appreciation. You had to listen to and pay attention to all different types of music. You didn't just play all jazz. You played jazz, concerts, marches, Latin music and everything. You had to write. To me it was just like a refresher course of what I took in high school, but this time it was on a much higher plane. It was almost like a college attitude. Then they refined a lot of your playing techniques.

They had some hell-of-a good teachers down there. Then a lot of the bands like Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Hampton—all of the big bands at that time—they'd come to town and a lot of them would come by the school. They would give us tips and things. We used to go where Gene Krupa used to play at—places where they'd invite the drummers from the different schools to come down and hear what the other musicians were playing. It would give you an idea of what you learned in school so you could put it to practical purpose. Man, that really set you off. It was not you just going to school and then you had no practical application. You *used* what you learned.

Then, they taught technique—how to play different things and how to count without really counting. You could *hear* eight bars without even thinking about it. You could hear four bars without counting, or two bars. When a lot of people write drum music, they don't put all the parts in there. If you're a drummer, you should know enough about drumming to improvise.

SF: Did they teach brush technique?

FB: They taught *every* technique. How to use mallets and brushes. You were not only taught drums. Every drummer had to have a second instrument which was the vibes. That gives you a feeling and an idea of what chord construction is. You might want to switch from vibes to drums. I was still young and there was a lot of the night clubs that I was still not able to go to. So I re-enlisted in the Army in 1948. I graduated from the Roy Knapp School and went overseas to Germany. While I was in Germany I got in the Special Services and got in the 427th Army Band. I spent about four years there. During that time I went to college. In that band I was again studying *more* music. But, this time I had the technique I learned from Roy Knapp and when I was home in Chicago from 1946 to '48 I had learned how to play bebop. When I got over to Germany the band wasn't playing it. We had a 28-piece swing band over there in Germany. Then we had five different small combos in the band and a large marching band. We were with the 7777th Honor Guard. And we had special uniforms—chrome helmets and uniforms like the troops at West Point. In order to get into the band, you had to read music. There was no shucking and jiving now. You read or you couldn't get in this band because we didn't play for nothing but bigshot statesmen from the United States, ambassadors, kings and queens. Whatever bigshot dignitaries came to Europe at that particular time, we were there.

SF: When did you get out of the Army for the final time?

FB: In 1951. I came back to Chicago looking to get back into my music. I had switched from drums and was playing a little vibes. I learned vibes when I was in Germany. I thought I'd do a switch and play more vibes than drums. When I came back I looked around for a lot of the guys I knew like Gene Ammons but they was gone. I think Ammons was with Woody Herman. Johnny Griffin was somewhere else and gone!

I knew Elgie Edmonds from 1946. I happened to run into him because he stayed in the neighborhood where my father was. He turned me on to the blues. He introduced me to David and Louis Myers. I said, "Well, I'll give it a shot." So that's where I got in to play the blues. But, on the side I was playing jazz too. I didn't just donate all my time to playing blues.

SF: You said that Elgie was older than you.

FB: Oh, Elgie was much older than me. Elgie used to play with a lot of the swing bands before he even knew anything about blues. From my early childhood, man, I never did know anything about no guitars and harmonicas. The only time I ever heard anything about harmonica stuff was when I used to see the Harmonicats in the movies. I might see them with some of those cowboy pictures with Roy Rogers or Gene Autry. Other than that I never knew nothing about no harmonicas. I knew about Larry Adler! He came by the high school one time. The blues was one thing, but that wasn't what I was raised on. I was raised on all other kinds of music. It gave me much more of an appreciation of what music sounded like.

SF: When you were in the Knapp School did you play in symphony orchestras using straight classical drumming?

FB: I played everything! That's what I said. When I was in the Knapp School you didn't just get yourself some drumsticks and sit up there and play snare drum. Uh uh. You had to know how to play snare drum, bongos, kettle drums, how to tune it, notes. You didn't just sit up there and "tit tat tit tat." You had to perform and play the notes, and you had to know what you was playing because then you got to a point . . . just like going to school to be a

doctor. They want to know whether you want to be an eye doctor or whatever kind of doctor you want to be. The same way with the drums. If you wanted to be a Latin drummer, then you specialized in the Latin part of the music. If you wanted to be a jazz or swing drummer—which is what they called it at that time—then you had to learn all the things about the swing. If you wanted to play marches and things like that or play in concert, then you specialized in that. This is the way the courses were laid out. They taught you all of it, but then they had another part where you specialized. It was the most wonderful thing I ever entered.

Photo by D. Shigley

"YOU CAN'T PLAY BLUES BY THE PAPER. BLUES IS A FEELING."

SF: Would the drummers from the big name bands come to the school and talk to the students?

FB: Oh sure. That's where we really got the feeling. Then when we came down to the clubs from the school, the drummers would be onstage and say, 'Now ladies and gentleman, we have some students here from the Roy C. Knapp School of Percussion. Let's give them a nice round of applause." We'd have about 25 or 30 students all sitting there.

SF: You came out of a well-schooled background. When you started playing with the blues musicians, you said they were playing three-bar phrases and seven-bar phrases. Did that drive you crazy?

FB: No, not really. Here's a funny thing. I thought I knew enough about music that I was able to play *anything.* But, here was a type of music I'd never heard of! Man, it was really something that I wanted to get to. I said to myself, "Wow! Here's something that I can't play and I think I know music! I'd better learn this." When I found out what they were doing, I found a way that I could straighten it out and help it along. I used my technique to play what they were playing. I improvised some of my own playing and then I was able to do it. Boy, that really knocked me out.

SF: And you really didn't have any drummer role models for the blues.

FB: There was not a lot of drummers playing what I was playing at all!

SF: Would you say that Elgie Edmonds was the first "blues drummer" that you ran into?

FB: Yeah. Elgie was the first blues drummer I knew that was playing the stuff. There was a lot of drummers out there, but the jazz drummers weren't hitting on the type of music that I was playing. When I got into it, it was a little different. The Myers brothers were the first guys I ever hooked up with playing blues.

SF: Did they have a rounded knowledge of all different types of music too?

FB: No. They were playing just strictly blues. Country blues is what they knew, see? That was a lot different. The blues weren't written down. There wasn't no stuff like you'd write it out on paper and play it. You can't play blues by the paper. Blues is a *feeling.* There's no way in the world that you can put your feeling into no sheet music and say, "This is the way it's supposed to be played," because it's not going to be coming out right. The blues the Myers brothers were playing was carried from one person to another. When it comes right down to it, it came all the way from slavery and everywhere else. The people at that time didn't know anything about writing no music because they couldn't read and write, period! So, there ain't no way in the world that you could write your music down.

SF: When you started playing blues did you listen to a lot of blues records?

FB: No. I was around so much with the different musicians that I just picked up on what they was doing. That was all. And then I got with the Chess Recording Company and everything was coming through there so fast. After I learned how to play with Dave and Louis, the other blues musicians started accepting what I was doing. I was making recordings just like pancakes!

SF: Were you a staff drummer?

FB: Yeah.

SF: Was that a salaried position?

FB: No. I was getting paid union scale.

SF: What was it like recording for Chess? What were the sessions like?

FB: Oh man! We had lots of fun. I recorded with so many musicians down there. I've recorded with just about every blues musician that came through Chess.

SF: Weren't there bands like Muddy Waters and Little Walter where you not only recorded with them, but you were also *in*

Photo by D. Shigley

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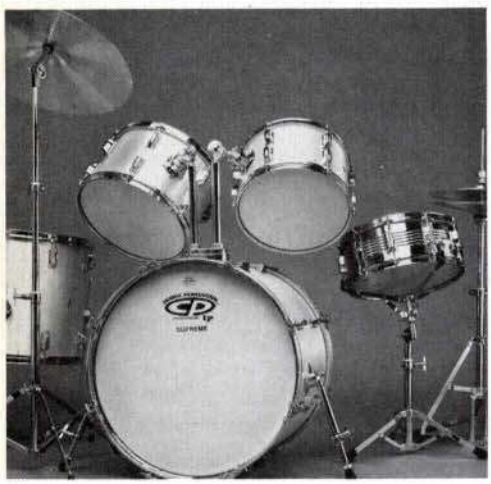
Semi-Pro

Practically every major manufacturer has added a lower line set of drums to accommodate students, semi-pro players and the budget-minded. This special Close-Up looks into some of these lower priced kits marketed by the "famous" names, as well as some manufacturers who specialize in this area.



COSMIC PERCUSSION CP-P5 COSMIC SUPREME

Latin Percussion has their own drum line out on the market: Cosmic Percussion. The *CP-P5* Cosmic Supreme kit has 9-ply wood shells, and is comprised of a 14x22 bass drum, 8x12 and 9x13 toms, a 16 x 16 floor tom, and a 5 1/2 x 14 metal snare drum. All the drums are fitted with *Soundmaster* heads.

The 22" bass drum has 16 separate lugs, T-handle tuners, and metal hoops inlayed to match the drum's finish. A felt strip is included for batter head muffling. The spurs are externally mounted, and have a ratchet angle adjustment. An inner leg allows telescoping of the spurs. The tips may be adjusted from rubber to a spike point.

The 8x 12 and 9x13 toms have 12 lugs each. The 16" floor tom has 16 lugs and three legs. They all have internal mufflers.

Cosmic Percussion's double tom holder is a replica of Pearl's. The base plate is very similar to Pearl's *Vari-Set,* accepting separate down posts, and using an indirect clamping method. The arms have ratchet angle adjustment, and have tabbed memory locks on both ends. As for the holder brackets on the toms, the arm passes through the drum and is secured in the split clamp by indirect pressure. Every section of the holder is very sturdy indeed, and there is enough height to satisfy most drummers.

The toms and bass drum all had good resonance and a full sound. The *Soundmaster* heads do not provide the optimum sound and tuning range, but they do serve the purpose here.

The snare drum has a chrome-finished metal shell, ten double-ended lugs, an internal muffler, and 20-strand wire snares. The strainer is of the side-throw design, with a fine-adjust knob. Its handle has a fat plastic piece which is molded to fit your fingers, giving a comfortable grip. The snares attach to the throw-off and butt sides with plastic strips. This drum sounded a bit boxy and loose. It was very difficult to get a good crisp sound.

All the stands have single-braced tripods with nylon bushings set into their height joints. One cymbal stand is included. It has two height tiers and a ratchet tilter. The snare stand is the typical basket design and has a ratchet angle adjust.

The hi-hat has a split footboard, and a fat chain linkage. Tension is not adjustable. A hose clamp on the height tube serves as a memory lock. There is a metal plate attached to the front of the stand base, which, when loosened and reversed, has spur points to keep the stand from sliding. The stand has quite good action, but is a bit noisy.

The bass drum pedal also has a split footboard, and uses a woven synthetic flex strap for linkage. Tension relies on double expansion springs, each separately adjustable near the base of the pedal. Two sprung spurs are at the base, and the usual wing screw/plate clamps the pedal to the drum hoop. Overall action is not too bad, but the footboard angle is much too acute. This problem could be solved by substituting a longer strap.

The *CP-P5* kit is available in four finishes. It is quite affordable ($749.50 retail), and does have many professional features.

A lower-priced, lower-quality *CP-P35* kit is also available, having a 14x20 bass drum, 8x12 and 9x13 toms, a 16 x 16 floor tom, and a six-lug 5x14 wood snare. The stands are lighter in weight, and a thin hex-rod ball-joint tom holder is used. At $549.50 list, the *P35* is best delegated to the young student.

GRETSCH BLACKHAWK

Gretsch is another major company with a budget kit. The drums have thick wood shells with a grey *Zolacoat-type* interior sealer. The kit includes a 14x22 bass drum, 8x12 and 9x13 toms, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 5 1/2X14 metal snare drum.

The bass drum has 20 lugs, metal hoops and tuners, and does not come with a felt muffling strip. The spurs are external, bent into a forward "L". There are two grooves in the mount plate—one for set-up, and one to pack the spur flush to the shell. The tips may be converted from rubber to steel spike. The drum is fitted with transparent black-dot heads, and since there is no muffling strip, has a bit of "boom" to it.

The 12" and 13" toms have 12 lugs each; the 16" has 16 lugs and three legs with convertible tips. The toms all have internal mufflers. The standard knob will adjust the degree of muffle; a winged collar bolt will then snap the muffler into on or off position. The idea is right, but a few of these were installed crooked, and one didn't

by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

Druimkits

even work. With the black-dot heads, the toms have quite a modern, punchy sound.

A Pearl *Vari-Set* style base plate is used for the tom-tom holder. The arms are like Pearl's old 727 ratchet arms, but are much longer, giving more than enough height. There are memory locks on both arm ends. The holder seems to be a pretty popular one. It sets up easily and is sturdy.

The snare drum has a metal shell with 10 double-ended lugs, and an internal muffler. It has a parallel strainer with fine-tension knobs at both ends. The snares extend past the shell, and there is a thin rod running through the drum. They've gone a bit too far on this strainer, with trying to give a "pro" look. The strainer just doesn't work well. Even at full tension, the snares rattle. It's a good try, but a regular one-sided strainer would be better.

All of the stands with the *Blackhawk* kit have double-braced tripod bases and a locking system. One cymbal stand is included. It has two adjustable tiers and a ratchet tilter, instead of a basket, the snare stand has a tri-arm holder with a moving third arm. The center section and arm grips are sheathed in a hard black plastic. A wing screw will extend or shorten the movable arm for secure clamping onto the drum. Angle adjustment is served by a ratchet, and the entire stand works well to hold the drum in place.

The hi-hat has a fat, split footboard and a two-piece black plastic link. The spring is housed inside the tube and can be adjusted via a drumkey-operated screw which compresses or stretches the spring.

The bass drum pedal has a large split footboard with a huge toe-stop, a single expansion spring stretched upward, a synthetic flex strap, and lever/cam clamping. Frame height is adjustable via two key-operated set screws. Lateral footboard angle will also adjust. The sides of the pedal hold "razor-blade" spurs which slide down when loosened. The action is extremely loose. A different spring would probably cure this problem.

The kit I saw was finished in a very professional-looking silver satin. Other finishes are available. Retail—$749.50.

LUDWIG STANDARD #986

In the late '60s, Ludwig had a brief run with a moderately-priced drum line—Ludwig *Standard.* The USA-built *Standard* line has since returned to the market. The Ludwig *Standard* kit contains: 14x22 bass drum, 8x12 and 9x13 tom-toms, 16 x 16 floor tom, 5 x 14 snare and the 9900 hardware package. The toms and snare are 4-ply wood; the bass drum is 6-ply. All are constructed in Ludwig's die-mold process.

The bass drum has 16 lugs with T-handle tuners and U-style claws. These are the same as on their pro kits. Its wooden hoops are painted black and have an inlay strip matching the drum's finish. One pair of straight, rubber-tipped disappearing spurs is installed, locked in place by a wing screw. A felt damper strip is not included. The drum was fitted with smooth white *Rocker* heads on both sides. These heads give a little more attack and volume than coated heads. The drum has a powerful sound with good volume and depth.

Ludwig's 771 double tom-tom holder is used with this kit—the same holder which preceded their *Modular* system. A diamond-shaped bracket on the bass drum accepts a single down post. The bracket has slots for Ludwig's *Quick-Set* memory lock, but it is not included. A hose clamp is used instead. The height of the down tube is set by a large plastic T-screw which pushes against an inner steel strip. "L"-arms are used to hold the toms. These arms are adjustable for forward angle and distance apart. Position is set with a hex bolt for which a separate tool is needed. The toms have columnar brackets with an inner "O"-ring. The arms do not pass through the shell, and again, a hex bolt is used to set height. The holder is sturdy enough to bear the full weight of the toms, but all adjustment points must be thoroughly tightened down, or the holder will shake and twist a bit.

The 8x12 and 9x13 toms have 12 lugs each; the 16x16 floor tom has 16 lugs and three legs secured in columnar brackets. All the drums have triple-flanged hoops, but have no mufflers installed. The drums have smooth white *Rocker* heads top and bottom. They all have good resonance along with a pretty pure tone.

The snare drum is also a wood-shell with a plastic chrome covering. It has eight double-ended lugs and the *P85* strainer. This strainer is the same as on the *SupraPhonic* snare drums; thrown off at the side, adjustable via a knurled-edge knob. The 12-strand wire snares have plastic ends and attach with cord. This drum comes fitted with a coated batter head, and *does* have an internal muffler. This drum sounds crisp and responsive.

All stands in the hardware package have single-braced tripod bases which fold up from the top.

One *1400* cymbal stand is included with the *Standard* kit. It has two adjustable tiers, each set by large, plastic T-screws. The tilter is a small ratchet and also has the large T-screw for adjustment. Ludwig may have made an error here: this T-screw is *so* large that it is possible it may foul the cymbal, so watch out. The stand is lightweight and will hold cymbals easily without tipping over.

The *1355* snare stand relies on a tri-arm to hold the drum, using a sliding third arm to adjust to various drum diameters. Stand height is set with another of the black T-screws, and a ratchet is used to set angle. For small-sized players, it may be a bit difficult to position the stand perfectly without getting in the way of the pedals, since its base is larger than most others. The stand works easily and holds the drum se-

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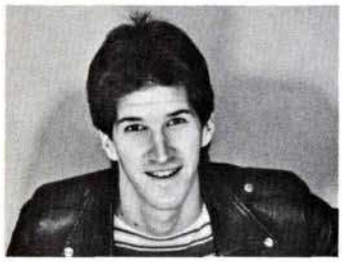

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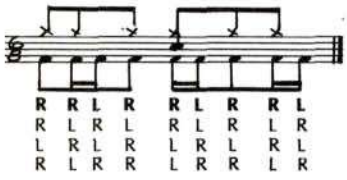

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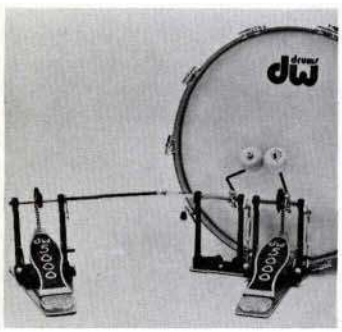

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The *1123* hi-hat operates on a direct pull system with non-adjustable tension. It has a split footboard with no toe stop. Beneath the heel plate is what Ludwig calls *Spur-Lok:* a serrated piece of metal which will anchor the stand to any surface, reducing stand "skating." A hose clamp is used for a memory ring. The clutch is positioned on the rod with yet another big T-screw, which may cause the same problem I described on the cymbal stand, especially if the top cymbal is kept loose. The stand is tall enough for almost anyone and has quite good action with minimum noise.

Ludwig has included the old dependable *Speed King* pedal with the *Standard* kit. It has a one-piece footboard, which may be converted to a semi-split one, and has double post, encased compression springs. Tension is adjustable, and the action always feels just right.

Shell interiors are unlacquered, and the kit is available in five finishes: chrome, red, blue, black and white. On the kit tested, the chrome covering was separating from the shell near the bearing edge on some of the drums.

The *Standard* kit retails at $1175, but may also be purchased without the hardware package at $895 list. Yes, the *Standard* line is back, giving drummers a decent quality kit at a decent price.

YAMAHA S252

Yamaha has introduced its own low-priced line: the *Stage Series.* The shells are made of Philippine Mahogany and are constructed using the same *Air-Seal* process that Yamaha uses on its pro drums. The lugs have a triangular shape, and are springless.

Five different set configurations are available in their catalog. Up for test was the seven-piece *S252.* Components are: 14 x 22 bass drum, 6 1/4 x 8, 8 x 10, 8 x 12, and 9x13 toms, 16 x 16 floor tom, 5x 14 metal snare, and *5 Series* hardware.

The bass drum has 16 lugs with T-handle tuners and U-style claws. At the bottom two lugs on both sides, the T-handles are replaced with square-head key rods for easier pedal mounting and drum tuning. The wood hoops are painted in a matte black finish, and a rubber piece is glued to the batter hoop bottom. The spurs are merely straight rods which will disappear into the shell. A felt strip is fitted behind the batter head, but the drum is still very ringy. The coated heads are produced by Yamaha themselves in Japan. They hold up well, but give a thinner tone than Remo coated heads do.

Mounted on the bass drum is the *TH-51W* tom holder, which is essentially a scaled-down version of its big brother *TH-91 W.* A single down post passes through a raised base block. This block uses indirect clamping to secure post height, and has a black nylon bushing ring inside. Atop the post is a simplified *TH-91W* holder, using the ball and cage system with protruding hex arms. Here, the ball holder is a double clamp, leaving much of the hard resin ball exposed. Practically any angle is available due to the smooth movement of the ball. The cage uses wing bolts to clamp the ball into position. A hexagonal opening in the tom bracket accepts the holder arm, which is also hexagonal in shape. The main benefit of this shape is to keep the drums from twisting out of position. The entire holder is sturdy and easy to set-up.

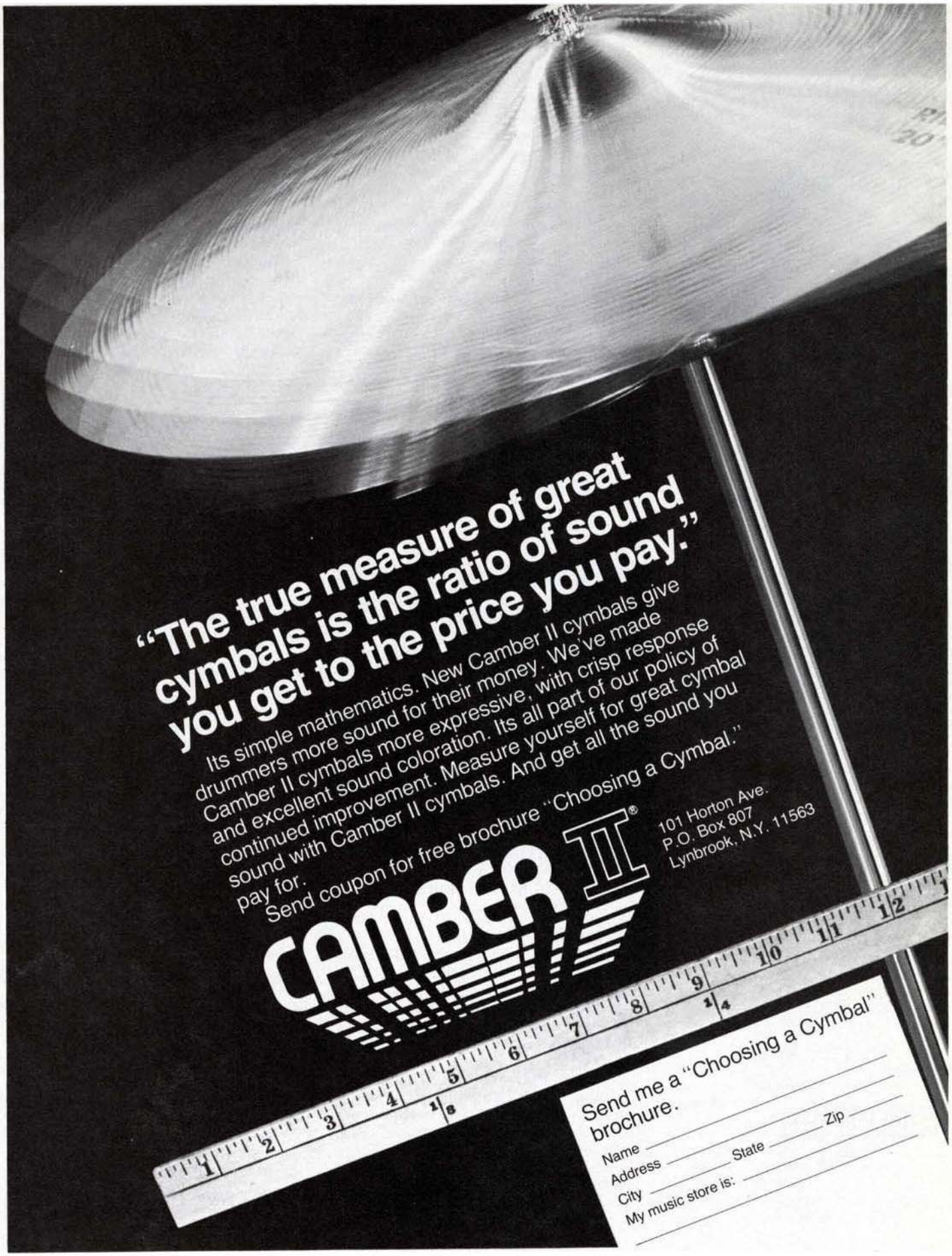
The 8x 12 and 9x13 toms have 12 lugs each; the 16 x 16 has 16 lugs and three legs. They all have triple-flanged hoops and no mufflers.

The 8" and 10" drums are a special-package set with floor stand (catalogued as *WT-500).* They are available as an addition to any *Stage Series* kit, and are used here to make a seven-piece set-up. The 8" has five double-ended lugs, while the 10" has six. Like the others, they come without internal mufflers.

Yamaha's own coated heads are fitted to all the toms. The drums have good resonance, but the Yamaha heads make it a bit difficult to tune the toms to a lower-than-normal pitch. As with the bass drum, a thin sound prevailed. Without any dampening, the overtones are hard to control. However, Yamaha makes optional external mufflers in two sizes.

The snare has a seamless metal shell and eight double-ended lugs. It has a side-throw strainer which is adjustable at the throw-off side only. The snares attach to the strainer with glass-tape strips instead of cord; a good move, since the tape will not stretch or break as easily as cord. Again, there is no muffler included. This drum is responsive, and has a wide sound capability.

Two *CS-510* cymbal stands are included with this *Stage* kit. They have single-braced tripods, two adjustable tiers, and small ratchet tilters. The stands are lightweight, but sturdy. A heavier *CS-712* boom is also in the hardware package, having a single-braced tripod, larger ratchet tilter, and two adjustable tiers. This boom stand can also be easily converted to a straight stand, since the boom arm will telescope into the top tier (giving *three* adjustable tiers).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Boom angle is adjusted via a rachet, and the arm itself is 13" long. The *CS-712* is very impressive!

The *SS-510* snare stand has a single-braced tripod base, as well. It features a dropped basket which will accommodate deeper drums quite easily. The stand clamps to the drum using a long T-screw at the basket's bottom to close the arms. A Hat hinge adjusts angle. Like all Yamaha hardware, this stand is well-designed.

The *HS-510* hi-hat has a tripod base, split footboard, and a plastic link. Tension is not adjustable, but the stand has good action. A hose clamp is fitted onto the height tube, and there is a nylon bushing at the joint.

Yamaha's *FP-510* pedal also has a split footboard, along with double posts, and a single expansion spring stretched downward. Tension is adjusted at the bottom of the spring holder. A fibre/nylon strap is used for linkage. There are not too many adjustments on this pedal, but all in all, it works fine.

Presently, the *Stage Series* kits are available in black, white and red. Yamaha does allow options of purchasing the entire kit with or without hardware, with different sized bass drums, etc. The 5252 retails at $1255. Without the 8" and 10" toms, it becomes the S152.

SLINGERLAND SPIRIT 1000

Slingerland has imported its own kit in the form of the *Spirit* 1000. Its shells are dark sealer. The kit includes: 14x22 bass drum (5 ply), 8x12 and 9x13 toms, 16 x 16 floor tom (all 3 ply), 5x14 metal-shell snare, and hardware. Here, the plys of a drum don't really mean anything, as the 3-ply toms still have a good thickness to them.

The bass drum has 16 lugs, T-style tensioners, and channeled metal hoops inlayed in the drum's finish. A felt muffler strip is installed behind the batter head. The spurs are the same as Slingerland's pro model. They angle a bit forward, have spiked metal ends and will disappear into the drum. Coated heads are fitted on both sides (presumably *Ambassadors,* since they have metal hoops, not epoxy like the *Soundmasters.)* This bass drum had a nice punchy characteristic, with good volume.

Mounted near the front of the bass drum is the tom-tom holder base plate. It has two holes, each accepting a single arm. The holder grips the tom-tom arms with split clamps. The arms have ratchet angle adjustment (done with a large T-belt) and have a large ratchet casting. The brackets on the toms are similar to Pearl's *Vari-Set,* utilizing smaller scale split clamps. Memory locks are fitted on both arm ends. These arms, being quite long, do allow more than ample set-up height. This holder seems to be the most popular with this class of drumkits, and with good reason—it is very sturdy and certainly will not sink or twist.

The 12" and 13" toms have 12 lugs each: the 16" floor tom has 16 lugs and three legs. There are no internal mufflers, and they all have Slingerland's unique curved hoops. The drums are fitted with coated *Anibassador-type* heads. All the toms had very good tone and fullness.

The *Spirit 1000* snare is a 5 x 14 metal-shell model having eight double-ended lugs, and a side-throw strainer. The strainer can be fine-tuned at the throw-off side, and operates very easily. This drum *does* have an internal muffler. A coated batter head is fitted—this one (like the snare side) has epoxy hoops, so I assume it is a *Soundmaster.* The drum had a somewhat thin, papery sound with the stock heads. It was responsive, though, and gave a pretty loud rim shot!

All of the *Spirit* hardware is Japanese import. The stands have single-braced tripod bases, and black nylon guard bushings recessed into their height joints.

Two boom cymbal stands are included. They have one adjustable tier, and a ratchet tilter. The angle/length of the boom arm is adjustable via a ratchet/eye bolt. A threaded, black counterweight is at the end of the boom arm. These stands will quite easily hold any cymbal without tipping over. This kit is the only one reviewed that supplies boom stands instead of regular straight ones.

The hi-hat has a split chrome footboard with an adjustable toe stop, plus an externally-housed spring. Tension is adjusted at the top of the spring cylinder—very easy to get at. There is a knurled knob spur at the base, and a memory lock on the height tube which fits over the entire joint. Action is smooth and responsive, while the stand itself is rock-solid.

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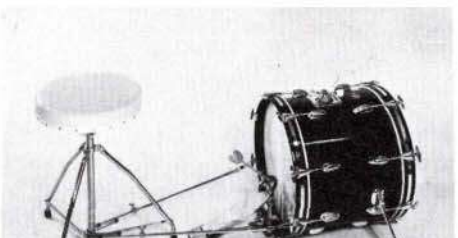

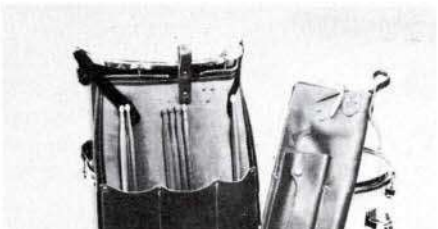

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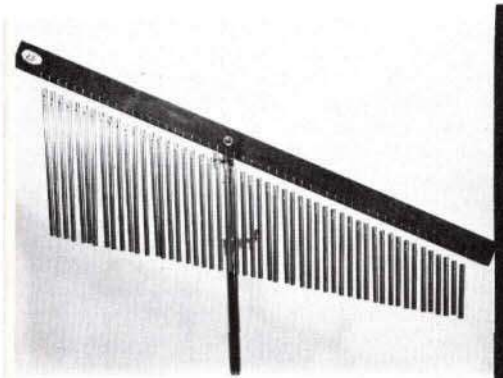

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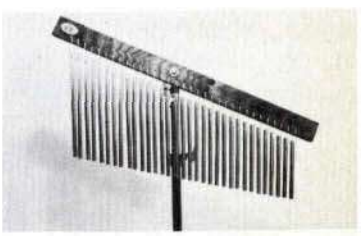

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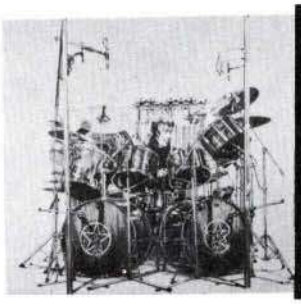

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The snare stand is of the popular basket-type, adjusted by a carriage ring on a threaded shaft. It has ratchet angle adjustment and holds the drum securely at any angle.

The *Spirit* bass drum pedal has a split footboard with toe stop, and an adjustable expansion spring stretched upward from the pedal frame. Length of stroke can be adjusted by loosening two set screws. A thick, pliable strap is used for linkage, and the pedal mounts to the hoop using the common screw-operated plate clamp. Action is a little slow on this pedal, but it is quiet and does have a lot of desirable pro features.

The *Spirit 1000* kit is available in either black, white or blue covering, and retails at $1100. For the beginner, it has great quality and, might even be useful as a back-up kit for the pro.

Slingerland also offers other *Spirit* series kits in various configurations, all at a pretty unbelievable value. In fact, the *Spirit 1000* kit can be ordered with square-dimension "megatoms" and a power bass drum for only an extra $40.00.

HONDO HP-525

Hondo is a relatively new name on the drumset scene, distributed by International Music Corp. in Texas. The shells are 6-ply maple and mahogany. Components of the Hondo *HP-525* are: 14x22 bass drum, 8x 12 and 9x13 tom-toms, 16 x 16 floor tom, and 5 1/2 x 14 metal snare drum.

The bass drum has 16 lugs, T-style tensioners, and metal hoops. The interior of the shell is spray-coated with a grey-colored sealant. A pair of disappearing spurs is fitted onto the drum. These spurs are straight steel and have convertible tips from rubber cones to spike points. The drum is fitted with Remo *Soundmaster* heads, and Hondo neglected to include a felt muffler strip for the batter side. The drum has a lot of attack, but it was sort of difficult to get a low-pitched sound out of it.

At the top of the bass drum shell is a large, four-cornered base plate receiver for the tom holder down tube. The down tube is thick, has a tabbed memory ring, and is secured at the base plate with a T-screw. To hold the toms, the holder uses knurled L-arms, which adjust via a ratchet. These arms also have memory height rings, and there are reference grooves cut into the ratchet for angle setting. The drums have rectangular receivers, tightened with T-screws. Hondo's tom-tom holder is similar to Tama's holder, and is *very* stable while affording a variety of angle settings.

The 12" and 13" toms have 12 lugs each; the floor tom has 16. The floor tom also has three legs which fit into castings that resemble the tom-tom receivers. The legs have convertible tips with large lock washers. Each drum has a knob-operated internal damper. Remo *Soundmaster* heads are fitted on all the toms. The drums did have a thin sound, but had ample volume.

The snare drum has eight double-ended lugs, 20-strand snares, and a chrome finish. The strainer is of the "stick-shift" type, and is connected with plastic strips. On this particular drum, the snares rattled excessively, making it impossible for me to get a crisp sound.

All of the stands with the *HP-525* have tripod bases and nylon bushings set into their height joints. The cymbal stand has two adjustable tiers, and a ratchet tilter. The hi-hat has a hinged-heel footboard, an internal spring, and nylon linkage. The top of the rod is knurled to give the clutch a better grip. Action was okay, but I found the spring itself to be very noisy.

The bass drum pedal's footboard matches the hi-hat. It has a metal linkage, and adjustable double expansion springs. Stroke is not adjustable. The pedal's action was rough, and it has a rather big footboard for its tiny frame.

The snare stand works fine, using a basket with carriage ring to hold the drum.

Hondo's *HP-525* kit is available in black, white, silver metallic, and gold metallic for $650.00 list. On this particular kit, the covering seam on the floor tom was separating. And, unlike the usual tacked or glued badges, these drums have *decals.* The *HP-525* would make a good starter kit.

It must be noted that, for some unknown reason, drum companies do not include drum thrones. However, practically every manufacturer has its own model throne available.

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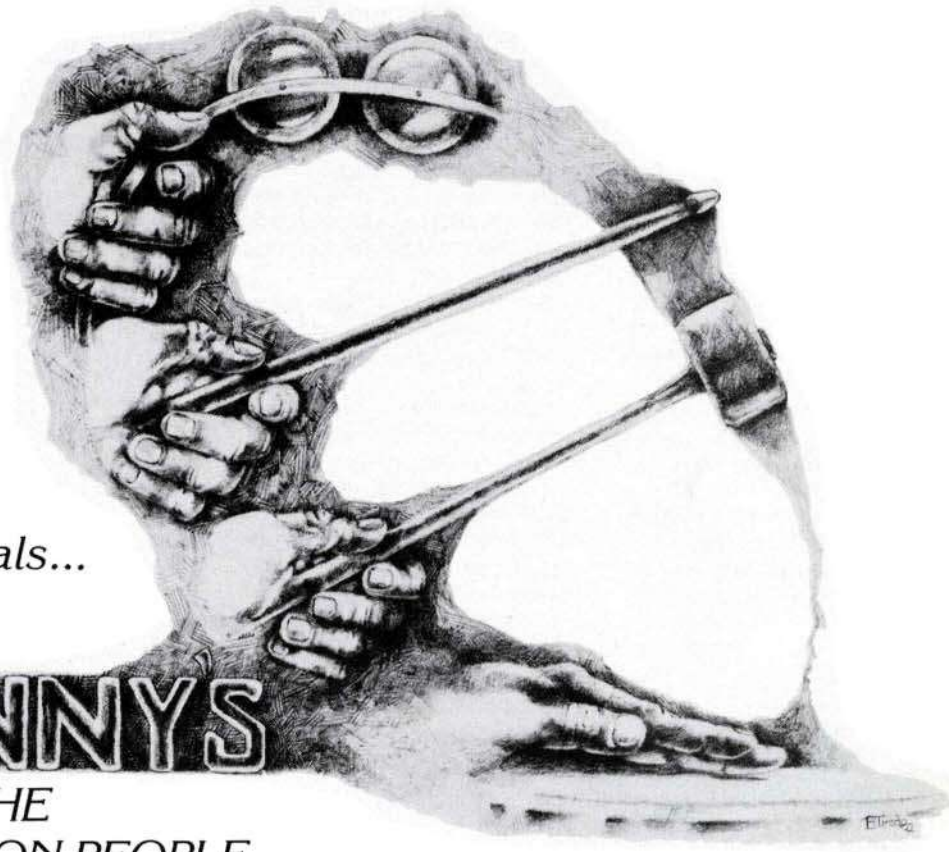

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by Buck Crain

The Keplinger Snare Drum

A 6 1/2" Keplinger stainless steel snare drum in brush finish with vintage Ludwig tension casings.

In recent years there has been a trend in the musical instrument scene that leads away from the large, established companies, toward smaller, more specialized private companies. In the drum community, one such company is Soundynamics of Seattle, Washington. On a recent visit to Seattle, I spent an afternoon with the man behind the company and discussed his unique line of snare drums, along with the aspects of operating a small independent business in the percussion field.

The origin of Soundynamics can be traced back to 1978 when drummer Gregg Keplinger found that no company produced a steel snare drum with the specific dimensions and features he desired. Undaunted, he set out to investigate the possibility of making his own eight-lug 6 1/2 x 14 steel-shell drum. The curiosity to hear the sound of a snare of that type, combined with the fact that one was simply unavailable from traditional outlets, convinced him to try his hand at turning out his own. "I looked all over for something that was 14" in diameter," Gregg explained. "I finally found a piece of stainless steel and the gauge I lucked onto. It was all accidental.

"I didn't really know how to put the bevel on it, and I was told that stainless was impossible to work with because it gets work-hardened. Another problem was figuring out how much of a bevel was needed. I kind of experimented with the bevel and the snare seat. It took a couple of weeks and a couple of shells to get the first one right. Just drilling this stuff was a major task because it's so hard. Then I went out and got old lugs out of a junkbox in a store and threw them on the drum. I just wanted something to hold the heads. I wasn't sure the thing would work at all." The assembled drum far exceeded Gregg's expectations. Five years later, after taking drummer Larry Larson in as a partner and expanding the operation, that snare drum still serves as the basis of what has now become Soundynamics' Keplinger Line of snare drum shells.

Content with the efficiency of existing hardware, Soundynamics' emphasis is on producing a high-quality shell that is available in custom sizes, affordable, and unique in comparison to anything else on the market. Like the original Keplinger Snare, all models currently offered are hand-tooled from 1/8"-plate stock. The shells are thicker and almost twice as heavy as any shell now put out by the larger drum companies. When rapped with a knuckle or struck with a stick, the shell emits a pure bell-like tone that can be heard when the drum is assembled and played. Gregg elaborated on the character of his shells: "The mass and rigidity of the material makes for the clarity, sensitivity and brightness of the drum. It has a rich tone because of the weight, and a lot of snare response at the edge of the drum. I use a 5 1/2" for rock and it's ultra-loud, ultra-powerful. The projection is rich; it's not a thin sound."

All shells are inspected by Gregg or Larry after being tooled, and all the "fine tuning" work on the bevel or snare seat is hand-done. Drilling and polishing, along with final assembly and set-up, is also handled personally, to insure that each drum meets the standard of quality necessary to keep a small business in operation. When asked about a guarantee on workmanship, Gregg's reply was as straightforward as the drum he makes: "There's not much that can go wrong with it. If anything goes wrong, send it back and I'll fix it or give you another one." Soundynamics is clearly concerned that the special qualities of the drum are not undermined by poor quality in workmanship.

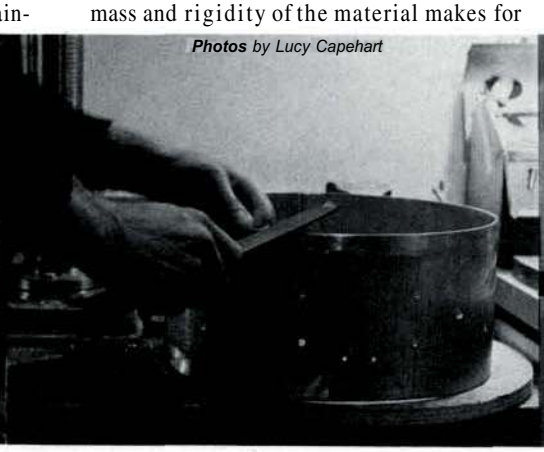
Two types of shells are currently available on a built-to-order basis: The stainless steel line has been in production longer and is the founder's personal favorite, but favorable response to a few *Black Iron* shells, convinced him to also make the *Black Iron* readily available in all sizes.

"The stainless steel shell is more brilliant than the *Black Iron,* which is drier and not as 'open' sounding. I made the *Black Iron* because I wanted to see the difference in tone. Basically, it projects the same and has the sensitivity, but it has a tone all its own," Gregg explained.

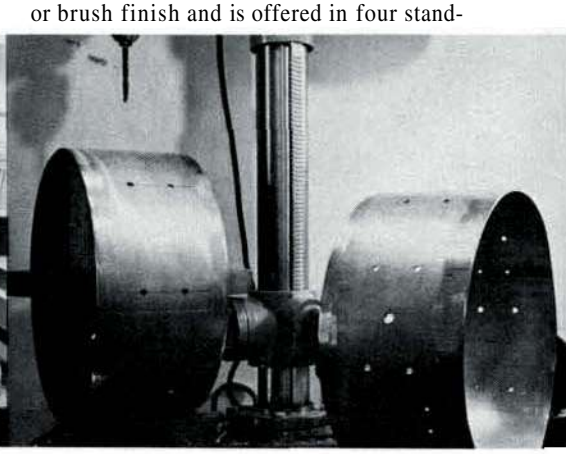
The stainless steel is available in a mirror or brush finish and is offered in four stand-

***Photos** by Lucy Capehart*

The stainless steel shell undergoes the initial beveling stage on a lathe.



Beveling of edges is later completed, by hand.



Shells are drilled in preparation for hardware mounting.

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The Rules

1. In 300 words or less, tell us why you want to win, and how you would benefit from percussion lessons.

2. The entry must include your name, address, age and phone number, along with the name, address and phone number of the instructor with whom you would like to study.

3. Winners will be responsible for transportation to and from the place of instruction.

4a. The winners have the option to apply their award toward the cost of lessons with their current instructor, or to begin lessons with a new instructor. The number of lessons equivalent to the $300 award will be determined by the winners and their instructors.

4b. If a selected instructor is unwilling to participate, the winner must select an alternate instructor. Award payment will be made by Zildjian directly to the participating instructors.

5. The winners may select their cymbal sets from any cymbal line or combination of cymbal lines the Avedis Zildjian Company offers. Cymbal sets will consist of one ride, one pair of hi-hat cymbals, one crash and one special effects cymbal.

6. Taxes and licenses are the sole responsibilities of the winners. In the event a winner is a minor, the prize will be awarded in the name of a parent or legal guardian.

7. The contest is open to residents of the U.S. except for employees of the Avedis Zildjian Company, Modern Drummer Publications, their advertising and promotional agencies, and their families.

8. The country will be divided into the following regions:
Region 1: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.
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Region 5: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming.
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9. Entries must be postmarked no later than October 15, 1983. Winners will be notified by December 1, 1983. Mail to:

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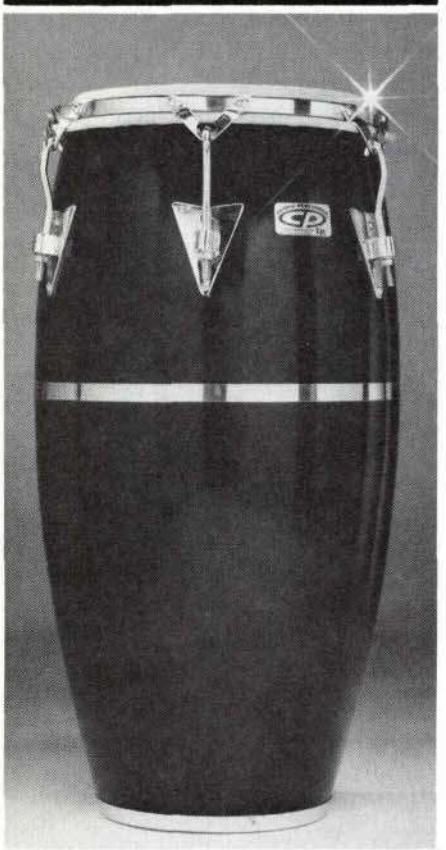

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ard depths: 5 1/2", 6", 6 1/2" and 8". The *Black Iron* shells are the same thickness as the stainless, but they weigh slightly more and retail for less. Sizes start at 4" and run through 8" in depth. All snare drums are 14" in diameter. The *Black Iron's* standard finish is a baked-porcelain enamel available in almost any solid color. "To my knowledge it's the only porcelain drum around. It looks beautiful, makes the drum heavier and it seems to thicken up the sound a little. Custom-designed, one-of-a-kind porcelain finishes are available by special order, too." Both types of shells can be obtained in custom-plated finishes like gold, copper-clad and black chrome at additional cost.

Believing that hardware "doesn't make or break the drum, it's the shell," Gregg and Larry settled on using readily available, quality hardware. All drums are currently set up with Rogers lugs and snare butt, Ludwig snares, Pearl throwoff and Gretsch die-cast rims. Purchasers also have the choice of supplying their own hardware, or requesting desired components to be used. Hardware must be sent to the company and requested parts will be obtained locally if possible, enabling the makers to set up the drum to their standards.

The main feature that Gregg believes makes his drum so special is simply the sound it produces. "It's allergic to wimpism," Gregg said, cracking a smile. "It's not wimpy, it's substantial. It isn't dry, but it can be dried up. It's hard to explain. The drum is really alive, has a huge sound and projects further than anything else. People have come up and asked me where the microphone is on the drum—and I'm not miked. It's got that much sound."

Satisfied that his first snare did the job expected of it for various rock dates, Gregg is quick to point out that his drum's usability doesn't stop there. For live use the drum can cover the spectrum from light jazz to hard rock. "Clarity isn't sacrificed in light playing, and the sensitivity and response make it ideal for brushes. In louder playing situations, the drummer can cut through with less effort. Heavier playing? Mass power, but with a distinctive tone. The tone is so big it can be intimidating; you can gear it to any room, any music."

The drum has also been well received in local studios. "Chris Leighton is a real fine studio drummer here in town and he has one. It records real well and the engineers crave it. Obviously, it must be dampened, either with an external muffler or the usual tape and padding. Dampening takes some of the high end and brightness out of it, but it still retains its character."

Realizing that you can only give out a certain amount of information before "having to let the drum speak for itself," Gregg sent samples to associates in New York and Los Angeles. The drums are being shown and circulated in hopes of getting some major studios interested in the line.

When asked to discuss some of the aspects of running a small business, Gregg readily covered both the good and bad sides in a frank manner: "Marketing's a drag. It takes a lot of money. The money we get out of a drum goes right back into getting enough materials to make more drums. There are problems of availability to stores and our credibility. I find it kind of bizarre to expect people to send me money for something they don't know anything about. I don't blame them. If I had a drum in a store in each major market area it would be great. People are real skeptical of handmade stuff on this level. We get a lot of people who have heard about us, but again, it's a matter of letting the drum speak for itself. One good part of operating at this level is that we deal with each customer on a one-to-one basis. They can talk with the guy that is actually making the drum. You get personal service. I'm trying to make a practical, sturdy, reliable instrument that has good sound and a really wide range. I think it's possible to keep doing it. It can be frustrating, but I really do enjoy it."

At present, Soundynamics' current line is selling well through word of mouth, small advertisements and exposure from professional drummers such as Fito de la Parra with Canned Heat, Moyes Lucas of the Jeff Lorber Fusion and Howard Gilbert with the Seattle Symphony.

Along with dedication, the other constant trait present in Soundynamics is Gregg's curiosity, which started the whole operation. His work area is filled with various projects ranging from a 24 x 15 symphonic snare, to a mini-aluminum drumset for his nephew. The company is planning a symphony line and piccolo line in the near future.

"I'm not in it to get rich," says Gregg. "I just do it because I dig doing it. My payment now is that it is a real boost, a rush, to have somebody want the instrument you make. However accidental it might have been, I've followed it through this far because I really dig it."

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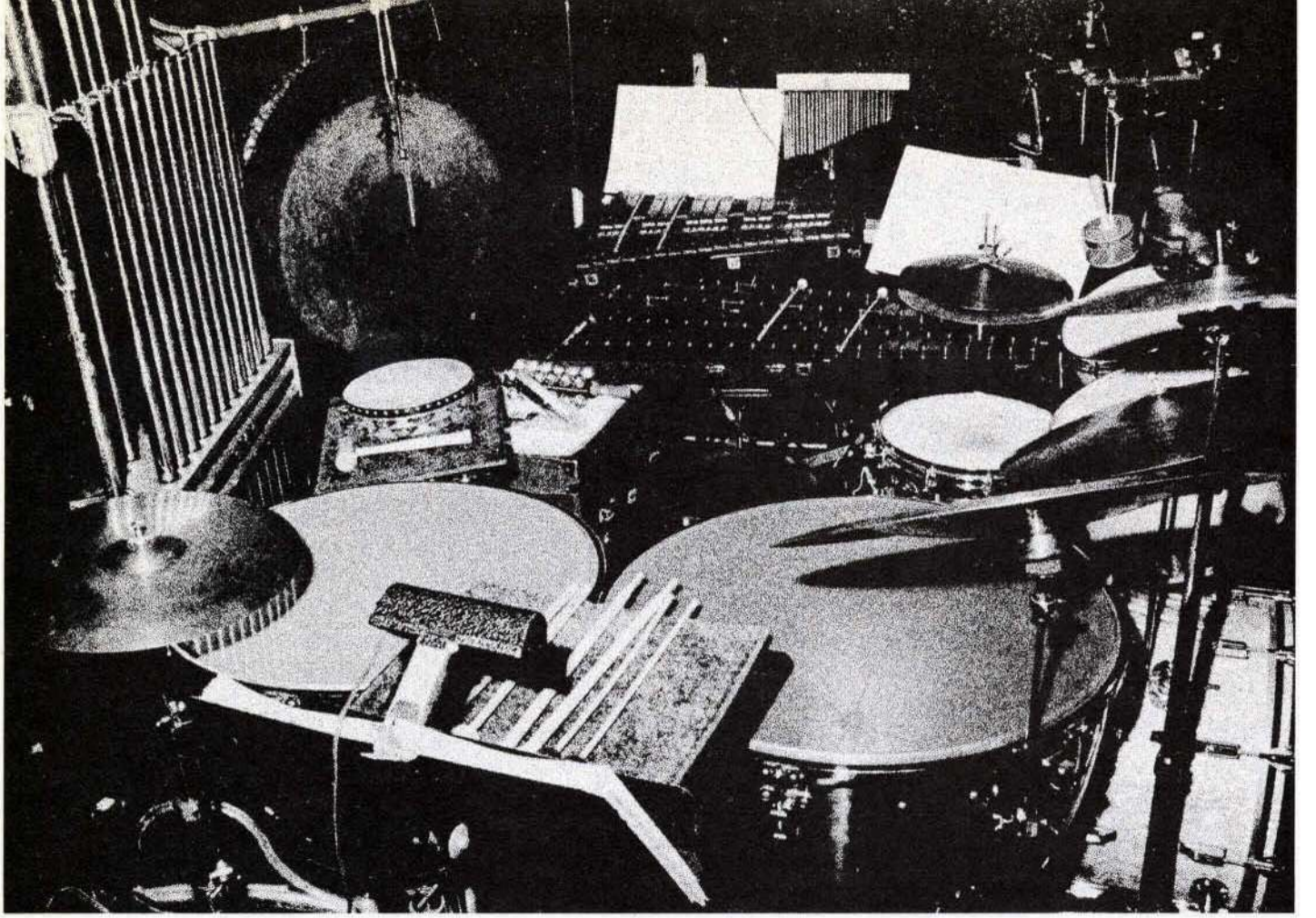

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Photo by Charles Stewart

M'Boom *continued from page 13*

from time to time.

SF: What were some of the original concepts that you were using as a framework?

Clay: Well, basically we wanted to adhere to some of the basic tenets that have been associated with what is known as "jazz" to the masses. It should swing, you know. But swing is not necessarily beating you over the head. We definitely want to get beyond the concept of having a drum battle. I think a lot of people who have heard the names associated with M'Boom assume it must be a big drum battle. "It couldn't possibly be anything else because they don't *do* anything else." Lo and behold, it has subtleties and nuances—taste. "Wait a minute! Hey, this is beautiful!" That was something that we sought within ourselves, and we've taken very harsh criticisms from each other. But those criticisms are always given with love. That's why we've been so receptive to each other and willing to believe that we have something worth sharing. In this way, it's been very spiritually uplifting to be able to hold back some of the tension that you would normally feel when someone criticizes you in certain circumstances.

Brooks: As long as he's another drummer, he can get away with it.

Clay: Some of the things we say to each other—if a leader, or horn player, or somebody else were to say those things, they wouldn't get the same response. We know that we're only as good as we all are together, and whatever we say to each other is for the greater productivity of the whole. We always want to make it good for all of us, and that's the only reason for it.

SF: Who are the role models for this kind of group?

King: The concept is the role model.

SF: I mean as far as playing jazz with a percussion ensemble. Were there any others in the history of jazz who did it?

King: Not like this.

Smith: No, but I think this follows in tradition as far as percussion ensembles go. We feel that as a group of musicians in this particular condition, we have a responsibility in the sense that we influence most of the musics. I think the whole universe is listening to black American music at this time, and particularly to the drummers. We have absorbed the whole history of what is known as jazz in this country, from slavery up to the present. Each one of us brings something from our heritage as well as something from the present. We're involved with different facets of everything that's happening. It's a style that is unlimited in possibilities.

It's sometimes difficult because each one of us is a drummer, and a drummer is like a conductor, so each of us is used to taking the responsibility of saying "It goes this way." Then you bump heads with seven other strong personalities and it has to mesh in such a way that you accept or give up your authority. It gets assigned to peo-

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ple in certain ways. If it's *your* composition, you just assume that role.

RM: Have you dealt with original material from the beginning or did you start out trying to play music which already existed?

Smith: Everything has grown as a result of our coming together, in the sense that anything that was out of our concept, we wouldn't have been able to do. There were certain facets of other people's concepts that we wanted to incorporate. If you like the way that Max Roach plays the drums, then you instruct yourself in that style.

RM: What are some of the considerations that you have to deal with when writing for this group?

Chambers: Well, one conclusion that we came to was that we would just try to stay in the jazz continuum—the small bands, the big bands, and what they were trying to do. We looked at what we had—the possibilities—and said, "Alright, how are we going to set this up?" So, for myself, I just broke percussion down into three or four different categories. I looked at it and said, "How do I get a bass line? How do I get chordal accompaniment? What do I use for melodic possibilities?" And there it is. You've got rhythm, so you break it down. Timpani and low marimba give you your bass line possibilities. The mallet instruments give you chordal and melodic possibilities, and of course you've got the drums. So that's one way to approach it. There are also textural concepts. You could have all wood sounds, or all metal sounds, or all membranes, or different combinations.

Clay: And of course there are polyrhythms. That's a given that we can expound with all our basic concepts. We can build a "one" that's infinite in terms of where we want to put the swing for any given section and how long the duration will continue. We can use a certain volume level with a certain texture to expound upon a concept of light or dark or multicolor or however you want to project the aural image. That is, I think, another area of growth for all of us—how to blend colors. Not to be restricted to just technical displays on a given instrument, but also to paint.

Chambers: Yeah, I think it's very important to get those combinations.

SF: Is this music duplicable? Do you think if you took this music to a college percussion ensemble, they could . . .

Chambers: Of course.

King: Sure.

Waits: Definitely.

Clay: One thing about this music is that if you see two or three of our performances, where we might be doing basically the same material, it's always fresh, because of the differences in the concert hall, or the number of instruments we can use, depending on the amount of space, or the adjustments we have to make so that we can hear each other, whether we have monitors or not. Sometimes we play much heavier than at other times. Today, I would think, was almost delicate. But nonetheless, I think we still conveyed our musical concept.

RM: There is a so-called "traditional" percussion ensemble literature . . .

Chambers: In terms of *who's* tradition?

RM: Most of the percussion ensembles that exist in schools draw from the same basic body of compositions. M'Boom doesn't play any of those pieces. What is different about the types of pieces *you* perform?

King: This relates to what was said earlier about our music being duplicable, and I have to take issue with the idea that what we do is duplicable. The percussion ensembles that have proliferated throughout the States are based on the Euro-American tradition. That is, they tend to lean more heavily on the notated music. There may be some open-ended pieces where you can do some improvisation, but I haven't seen anything approaching what we do in M'Boom, where we improvise with all the elements. That's not to imply that our music isn't highly structured or highly technical at the beginning, but there is room for improvisation. And not only can M'Boom improvise with drums, but they're able to get that same effect with all the percussion instruments. So I think a percussion ensemble in the States, as we know it generally, could read the music, but they would probably be no more successful in duplicating our overall effect than another group of musicians might be in taking Basie charts and trying to get the same effect that Basie gets.

Smith: I started out in college dealing with so-called "classical" percussion pieces, like Varese's I*onization* and Amadeo Roldan's *Ritmica,* which were supposed to have been the first percussion pieces written. But I had already been exposed to African music, which was essentially percussion ensembles of a very deep nature. There are also other cultures which have centuries of percussion tradition, which have never touched Europe for influence. When I first listened to Varese, I realized that it was imitative of our improvisatory music. That music is very difficult to sight read, but there are several of us here who have done it. Now, that's one tradition, but it's limited by the fact that it is duplicable every time. Three hundred years from now, that music will sound essentially the same. What *we're* doing now is going to grow. When people play this music and follow our tradition—when they improvise—it will be defining the temper of the times at that point. What we're doing improvisationally is what we feel emotionally, and that's going to be different ten years from now. It's different from when we first started. That's why it really can't be duplicated in improvisatory form.

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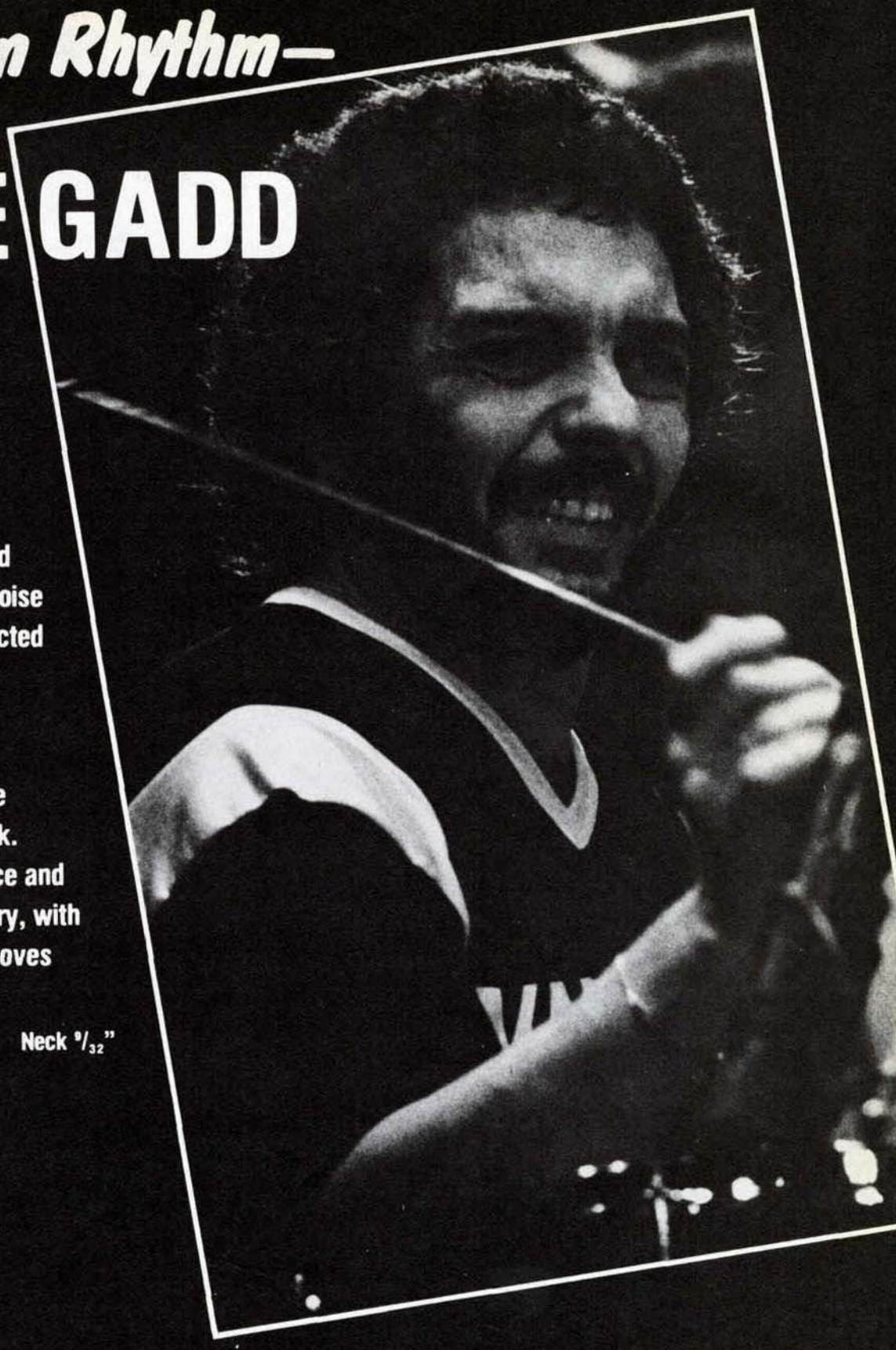

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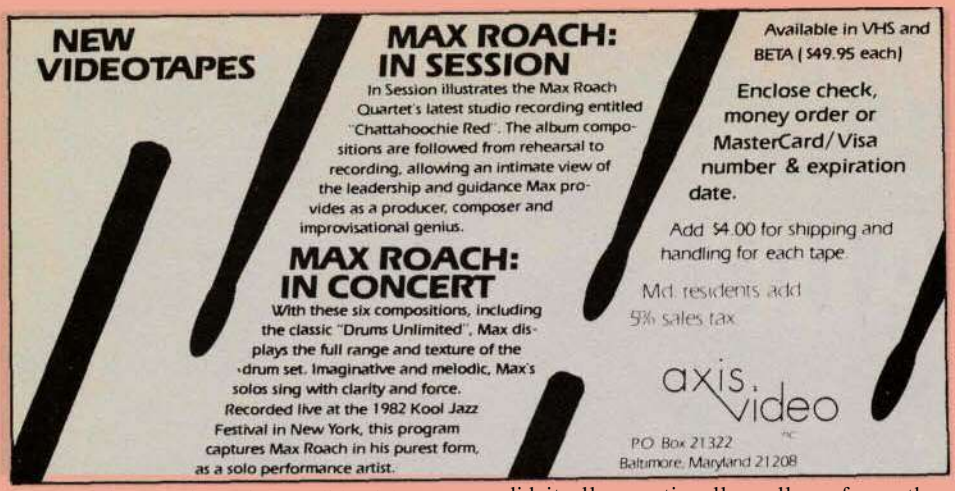

SF: In the MD interview I did with Max last year, he distinguished between a creative musician and a recreative musician, with a symphony player being an example of a recreative player. How do you classify yourselves?

Smith: We can do both. We can synthesize it, that is, we're historians who are familiar with the traditional sounds of our profession, and we're also experimenting and changing. We're using bits of everything; it's all put before us. If it happens to be European and we like the sound of it, we'll use it.

SF: How much of a composition is usually charted out?

Clay: We have a couple of compositions that are completely written out from the beginning to the end; no improvisation whatsoever *except* the way we play it. Each performance will be different, even though it's completely written out. Everybody has a specific thing that they're supposed to fit in someplace in the time that we are reading it.

SF: Are any of these compositions on the record? [M'Boom. Columbia IC-36247]

Clay: One is: "Twinkle Toes." All the pieces are written in terms of textures, combinations of colors, and rhythmic structure or rhythmic feel—where we place the emphasis. We can play a tune in a couple of multi-meters, and it can be conceived as a three, a four, a six or a twelve, depending on how we want to feel it at that time. Yet the same things are continuing to happen right along.

[At this point, Max Roach entered the room.]

RM: Is there anything that we've already touched on that we should go over again to give Mr. Roach the opportunity to comment?

Waits: You were asking about the beginnings of M'Boom, and we explained it from the aspect of us receiving a call from Mr. Roach. The other aspect would be Mr. Roach's side of it.

Roach: I had met some of these young musicians around New York who were writers. I knew that Chambers played piano and I'd heard some of the work he'd done for big bands. I knew that Warren Smith did it all exceptionally well, as far as the whole percussion family was concerned. During the spring I'd go down to Puerto Rico and enjoy those wonderful Casals Festivals, and that's where I met Fred King. He and I did some impromptu things and he would handle the total percussion family. I knew about Roy Brooks' writing for bands, and I knew about the stuff Waits had done with Lee Morgan. So basically I said, "Why don't we get a group of guys together?" I called up Warren, and he came to my place and we sat down and started talking about people who we felt could deal with this whole thing. Of course, we knew Omar Clay was a total percussionist. He was another person who did everything so well. I knew about his experience playing set with Sarah Vaughn, and all the other people he has worked with. Warren had this studio here, and he was very generous about sharing it.

So I figured, "Well, if we put everybody together and form a *cooperative* group, we'll *have* to stay together." [laughter] We'd have to stay together and we could develop an original personality in percussion, that would come out of our American musical experience. It could have blues and Gospel and whatever idiom you want to name, just as long as it has that attitude of open endedness—"Let's try this and let's try that." What's so important about us here is that we're not bound to *any* traditions at all.

So we took advantage of the fact that we had all these different personalities, and we had all this to work with. I want to tell you, when we first started, we worked through all kinds of things. I mean, music was brought in here for us to play that didn't resemble anything you've ever imagined. Some of it was really avant-garde, and we're still doing it.

M'Boom deals with sound and textures, through the pieces that are brought in by Chambers, and Warren and Brooks. And when Ray Mantilla came to us later with all of his gifts, that gave us another personality. So that was it, basically. Warren and I went down the list of folks, and ... I think we had Jack DeJohnette in mind at one point, did we not?

Smith: Yes.

Roach: We called him up but I think he was involved with Miles. So that was how we put it together, and I want to tell you, every one of the personalities is as different as night and day. When I first realized what we had, I thought, "Woah." But that's what makes the thing. When you can get people who are that diverse, and who have that kind of talent, and that kind of integrity, and whose standards . . . you know, sometimes we'd spend hours just talking about one note, because everyone hears it differently. From that point on, everybody's personality began to shape the group, and it's still doing that. Although we've been together for well over ten years, we haven't really dealt with it that much, but the fact that we've stayed together, I think, has been important. There were years when everybody had a lot of things they were doing. I think everybody has been involved in education, but that helped us. The group was founded, not as a group that we were going to deal with full time, but as something we would deal with at our leisure, in a sense. We're not bound by the fact that we are going to use this group to support us. Everyone has to be self-supported; everyone has their own things going. That has been a God-send to us.

I'm happy to be with these people. I've learned more about percussion in M'Boom than in all the years I've been playing—especially what I *shouldn't* do.

SF: Since everybody's involved in education, how does the next generation of drummers look?

Roach: It's very gratifying. The people who are our roadies can cover for all of us. M'Boom is a textural kind of thing. You don't have to play like Waits or Brooks or Smith to fit into that textural sound. If any one of us, for some reason, is not on the scene, those roadies cover us. Those kids you saw today are exemplary percussionists. Some are students of Warren Smith or of mine, and they are really fine players. They do all of it. When we were on this last trip in Europe, and Joe Chambers had some other commitments at one point, the roadie went in and the hole was filled. Not Joe's personality, but the parts were covered. So we have a group of people around us who are doing things that I couldn't do at their age. I mean that. This is a crop of young players who are very, very fine.

Waits: I find that a lot of the young people who I'm working with are so aware of M'Boom; a lot of people are coming to

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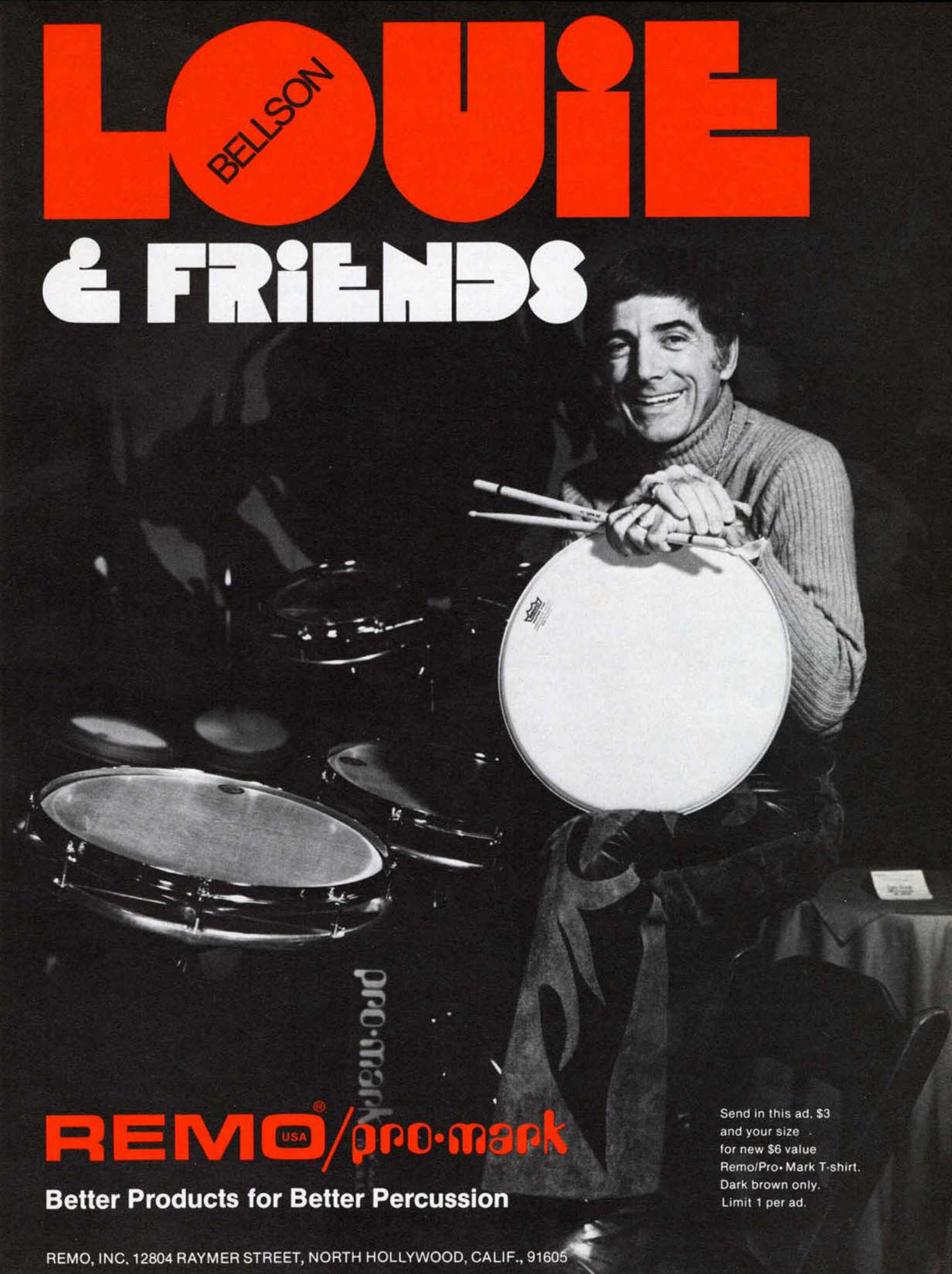
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study with us because of what M'Boom has done. The young people are aware of what this is and what it means to the future. They are aware of the concept that M'Boom works from, and they come in and start from there. And they're looking at us ... a student said to me. "You're from Mississippi, you played the blues, you went to Detroit, you went through the whole Motown experience, you came to New York to work with McCoy Tyner and Lee Morgan—that's a whole entity. And there's Roy Brooks from Detroit, who worked with Horace Silver and his own groups, and that's an experience. Fred King has worked with symphony orchestras, and there's Mr. Roach ..." When you look at what M'Boom is, it's incredible, and young people are aware of it, and *I* wasn't aware of *that.* The young people are aware of what each individual is about, and to them, something like this has been around a long time.

Now, the question was asked, could our music be duplicated?

Roach: Well, that's the point. We struggled with this too, you know, because these people can write and read anything, and if you write it, it can be dealt with. So that was no problem. But the music that came out of America that is so wonderful, to me, is democratic. Jazz exemplifies democracy because if you put a trio on the stage, they all play the head, and then each member has a chance to make the composition a reality. It's not just under the dominance of *one* personality or one individual. That's the premise of M'Boom. If Joe or Roy brings in something, we look at the piece and that gives us the skeleton of an idea. We're all allowed a vote, so to speak, to make this what it is. *That* you can't duplicate, unless you've got a person just like Waits, for example, who *hears* the way he does, to fit into that texture. The next person who comes in will bring *his* own individuality into the whole thing. So the premise of this is freedom, because to me, what jazz did was to free the musician from the tyranny of tradition. So we kind of said, "Okay, let's use *everything,* and put it together," which is what this country is about.

Chambers: People often say that music is the universal language. That's true, but jazz is the universal music. It's the music that everyone wants to play, because it's the music that allows freedom of expression for everybody.

King: I'd like to add a personal statement to that, not because I want to talk about myself, but because I came this route that they're talking about. I've spent time with the cream of the crop—people like Casals and Mehta—but I simply didn't want to do that kind of work anymore. When I heard M'Boom, I was so excited. Everytime I got a chance to hear them, I would consider it a real blessing. I just really decided that I didn't want to follow that other course—not to take anything away from it—but I felt that I needed the freedom that M'Boom was offering. It offered me more of an opportunity to explore my own creativity. With all due respect to the Zubin Mehtas and so forth, their music doesn't offer that kind of involvement.

Roach: I think that's what attracts most people who hear us. When people would come up to us on our European tour, they'd say, "You have such a chance to express yourself." Everytime we perform it's an experience, because I know it's not going to be the same as the last time. It's better.

SF: Are you trying to get the group out more?

Roach: Oh yeah, we never refuse work. Although we have to check with everybody to see where they are. I remember a concert in Madrid, and McCoy Tyner was on the same bill. He came up to me and said, "Max, you've got all the best drummers. We can't get anybody." So M'Boom is really an all-*star* creative force. As I say, it's a heck of a group to be involved in. All of this independence of all of these strong personalities can be a headache sometimes, but I'll be honest with you, I wouldn't change them. The musicianship is at such a high level, and it's all woven into the texture of the sound, which is what the essence of the group is.

SF: So this is a totally self-supporting organization?

Roach: Yeah. We would accept grants, [laughter]

Waits: Subsidies.

Mantilla: We need a grant writer.

SF: That's pretty amazing that you've existed 12 years as a totally self-supporting group. There are guys out there moaning the blues about how "If I could only get some funding ..."

Roach: Well, it's always been like that, with the secular element of the music anyway. You know, if you go back and look at the history of it, it wasn't until recently that the NEA began to recognize jazz, and throw money here and there to both institutions and individuals. But M'Boom, like all the rest of American music, has been standing on its own two feet. It's a good thing that we were never led to believe that we had to have money from the outside to survive, otherwise, we wouldn't have survived. We have always had to do it ourselves. If people don't come through the door, we don't get paid. But we grew up like that, so we were prepared for it.

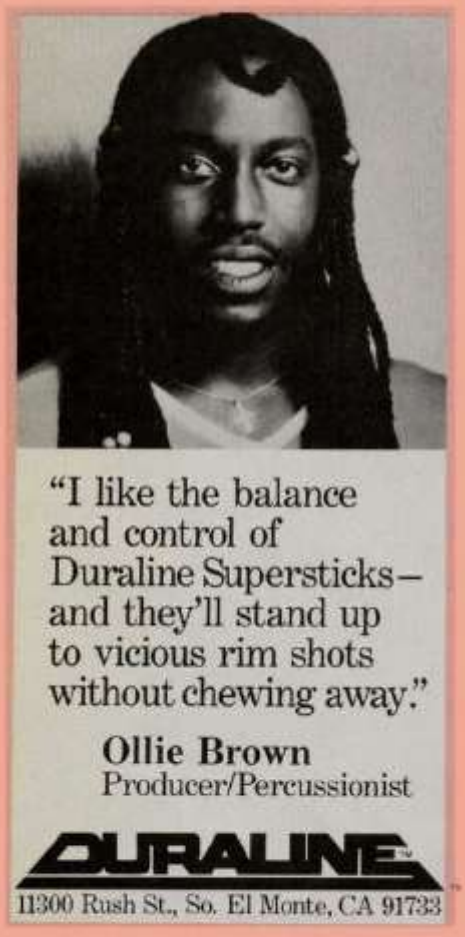
The thing that I hope this group will do, more than anything else, is stimulate drummers not only to have a formidable drumkit, but also to add timpani and mallets and the other things, so that percussion will grow and grow and grow. I hope that people will be inspired by seeing all these great set players do other things. So that's the kind of thing I hope we are instilling in the younger percussionists—to really get involved in percussion and to write.

SF: Do you see groups springing up as a result of this?

Roach: Yes! The percussion world should grow, like all the other musical worlds. Of course, the other percussion ensembles—Nexus and folks like that—are into the same thing. I think it's wonderful.

RM: Mr. Clay mentioned earlier that one of the concepts behind M'Boom was that it wasn't going to be a drum battle. Do you think that M'Boom is helping drummers see that they can play with other drummers?

Roach: I hope so, yes. Drummers are a special family; they kind of love each other. I remember when we did the thing in Central Park with Krupa. Guys came from all across the country to play, and it was a beautiful day for drums. History has kind of overlooked the contribution of the percussion players, and I've never understood that. So this has created sort of a family among drummers. It's a special kind of "hello" when you see another drummer.



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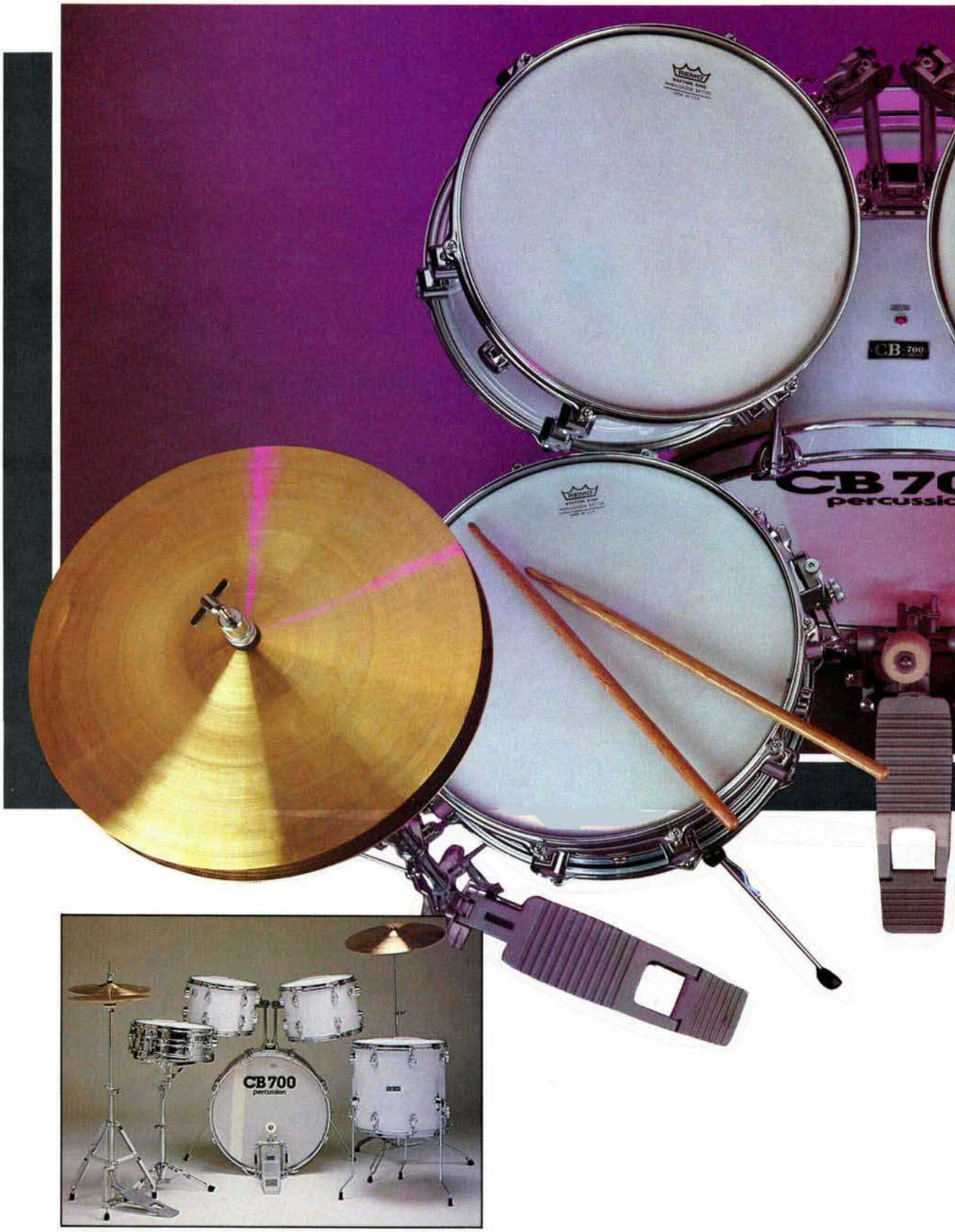

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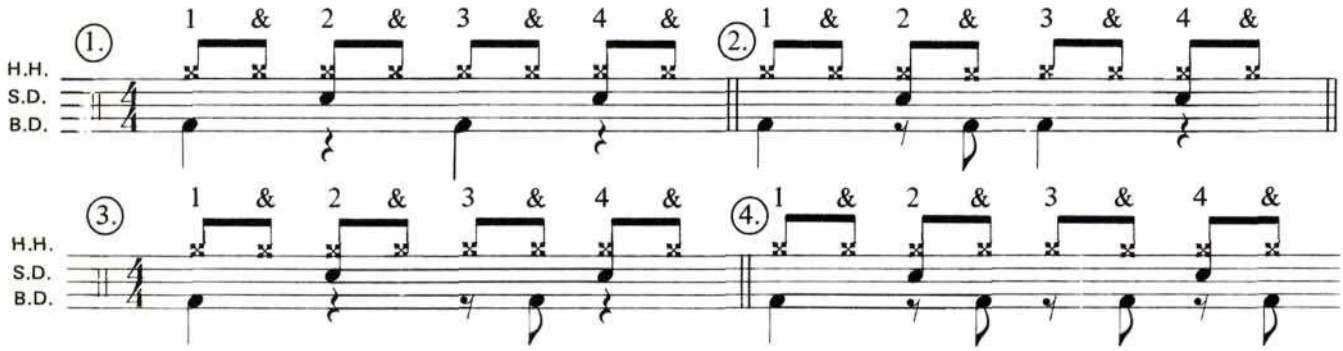
by Jim Payne

An Introduction to Funk

Rock 'n' roll and funk are closely related. There's no definite line that separates one from the other. Elements of rock can be found in funk and vice versa. However, several general distinctions can be made between the two styles. In rock, the bass drum patterns are generally based on 8th notes and quarter notes. The snare drum is usually played on "2" and "4". The hi-hat is usually played in 8th notes and the tempos vary from quarter note = 80 to quarter note = 160.

Sample Rock Beats:

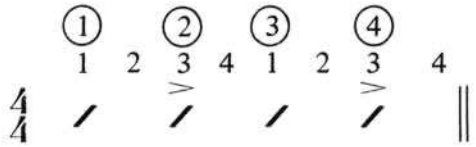


In one sense, funk is simply rock played in a more syncopated manner. Rock is usually based on 8th notes. Funk is usually based on 8th notes *and* 16th notes. The 16th-note syncopations establish an underlying *double-time feel.*

The music can be felt in two ways—

1) Main pulse:

2) Underlying double-time feel:



In the double-time feel, both backbeats fall on the count of "3".

Avoid complexity. In funk, the drummer generally has more liberty and ad-libbing is acceptable. However, overly complex patterns should be avoided. The test for a truly funky rhythm is not how complicated it is but how it hooks up with the bass, guitar and other instruments in a fresh and original way. In many cases this can be done very simply.

If, by playing an overly complex pattern, the drummer's rhythm becomes uneven, he is neglecting the most important part of his job-creating a solid groove and a steady, even time feel.

Funk tempos are usually slower than rock tempos. They range from quarter note = 69 to quarter note = 104.

Syncopated 8th- and 16th-note bass drum patterns are a trademark of modern funk. Some of the drummers who have been innovative in the use of syncopated bass drum beats are Clive Williams/Joe Tex; George Brown/Kool & the Gang; and James Diamond/The Ohio Players.

Some of the patterns below require a good deal of hand and foot technique and cannot be learned overnight. A more detailed, progressive coordination study will produce more lasting and flexible results.

Sample Funk Beats with Syncopated B.D. Patterns:

Solid backbeats on "2" and "4" still dominate most funk rhythms, but softer variations are played on the snare between the accented backbeats. Nat Kendricks, John "Jabbo" Starks, and Clyde Stubblefield, drummers who worked with James Brown, were among the first to develop this style.

Sample Funk Beats with Snare Drum Variations:

In funk the hi-hat is usually played in 8th notes and various combinations of 8ths and 16ths. There is a wide range of creative patterns that can be used. Listen to Joseph "Zig" Modeliste of The Meters.

Sample Funk Beats with Hi-Hat Variations:

The next step, of course, is to combine bass drum, snare drum and hi-hat variations. The creative possibilities for new patterns and rhythm feels are endless and that's what makes modern funk and all modern music exciting.

Create your own rhythms!

Sample Funk Beats Combining Variations:

This article is based on material presented in Jim Payne's Funk Drumming *book & cassette ' 1982 by Mel Bay Publications, Inc. Pacific, MO 63069. Reprinted by permission.*

by Roy Burns

Trying Easy

Some years ago in New York, during my studies with RUDI (Swami Rudrananda), one of the students made the following comment: "I am really trying hard, but I am not improving." RUDI replied, "You must learn to try easy." We were each advised to think about this concept over the weekend and apply it to some part of our daily lives. In my case, I applied the concept to drumming to see what I might understand from it.

My first understanding was that it means "Don't force it!" We have all known drummers who are relentless practicers. They usually say things like, "I practice five hours a day, every day. How many hours do you practice?" Practicing, in this case, has become an ego-oriented athletic event. "Practice 'til it hurts" is another way of saying it.

To me, this approach is physical as compared to musical. The problem is not the hours practiced but the attitude. You cannot force yourself to improve by relentless over-practicing. Drummers who do use this approach often sound stiff and unmusical when playing in a group.

Then there is the situation with the student and the teacher. The student says, "I am having trouble with this lesson and I *did* practice." The teacher often says, "You must try harder." Sometimes we try so hard that we actually make things worse. As a matter of fact, most good teachers will say something like, "Well, let's try it this way," or "What specific areas are you having trouble with?"

The "try harder" approach is regarded as old fashioned by many contemporary teachers. However, if the teacher is not properly trained or is not sure exactly how to help the student, "try harder" is a convenient out—convenient for the teacher, not the student.

The student might then ask, "Should I stop trying? Maybe I should forget lessons and just play. Perhaps this is too hard for me." Or, "Should I try even *harder?"* Based on my studies and my experience, the answer would seem to be, "Make the effort, but do it with intelligence and sensitivity."

For example, be aware of your body. If your muscles feel tense, if there is pain when practicing, or if you feel tired quickly, you may be using the wrong approach. Seek information by asking questions of accomplished players and teachers. Sometimes, the technique (grip, hand position, arm movement etc.) you are using may not be appropriate for what you are trying to do. If a carpenter is building a house, he needs the right tools. If he doesn't have the right tools, he will be frustrated and not produce good results. In the case of a drummer, one of the tools required is an adequate technical approach for the music being attempted. A knowledge of music is equally important.

Many things become easy to play when the appropriate technical approach is used. A classic case is the buzz, or closed, snare drum roll. Great strength and great speed are not needed. In fact, a roll is easy to play when using an effective method. With the wrong method it can become impossible. Remember, technique really means *skill.* It doesn't mean just speed. Intelligence and skill go together.

"Trying easy" means making the effort while paying attention to what you are doing. "Blind" practicing, such as playing as loud and fast as possible for hours, is practicing without listening. Paying attention in music means listening. So, "trying easy" means paying attention to your body, to the evenness, to the tone quality, to the tempo, to the volume level and to the feeling with which you are practicing and/or playing.

Last, but not least, trying easy is a result of doing something you love to do. However, if you are on an ego trip, such as trying to be better than everyone else, you will probably try too hard. You will notice that most great players play with a certain joy; a certain enthusiasm for drumming and music that never leaves them. Trying too hard to be perfect or to be number one is a sure way to take the joy out of playing.

If you are playing music you hate just to pay the rent, I admire your sense of responsibility. However, having done it at one time, I know there is not much real joy in playing only for the money.

When you love the music you are playing, joy just happens. The music seems to play itself. It becomes fun. It becomes easy.

Trying easy also means improving at your own pace.

Trying easy means believing in yourself.

Trying easy means a joyful effort.

Trying easy means doing what you enjoy doing.

Trying easy means no ego hang ups.

Trying easy means that you are in no hurry.

Trying easy means being relaxed.

Trying easy means playing naturally.

Trying easy means not forcing it.

Trying easy means *trying with patience.*

As RUDI told me many years ago, "If you are to be really good at any endeavor, you must love it. However, if your main drive is your ego, there will be little joy and a lot of pain and effort."

So relax, learn to try easy and enjoy what you are doing. After all, that is why we play music, isn't it?

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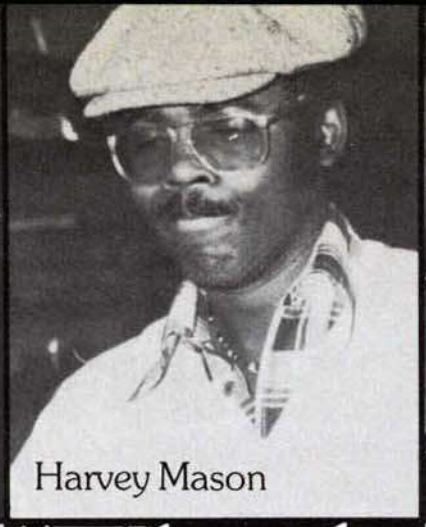
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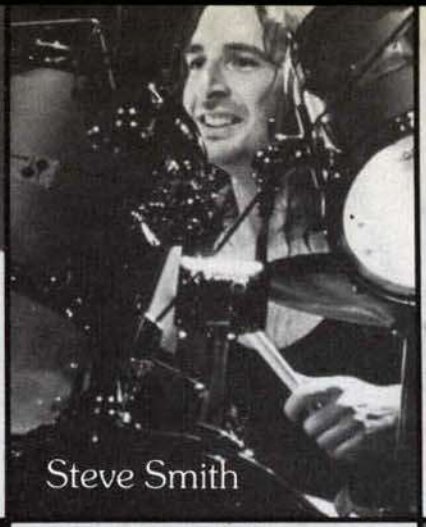
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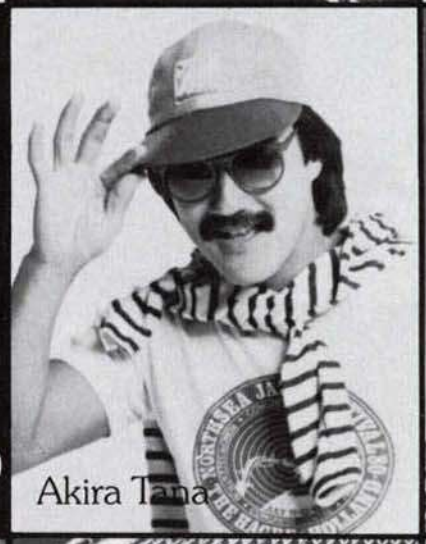
"What do these great artists have in common?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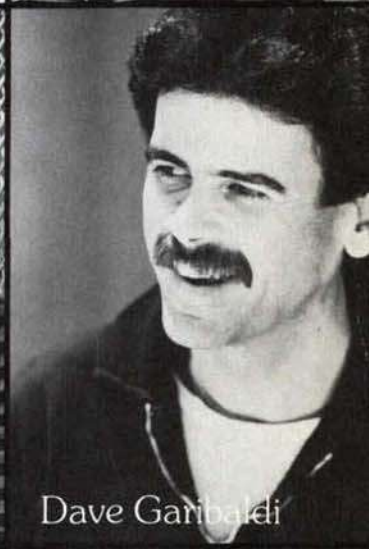
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by Charlie Perry

Dr. Ralph LaFemina

Exploring New Directions

The fact that Dr. Ralph LaFemina was never a performer in the big leagues of music, or that he's a practicing psychologist rather than a full-time musician, does not detract from his contribution to drumming.

In all fields, a new concept is often opposed, ignored, or ridiculed if it's revolutionary in principle, especially when presented by someone outside of approved circles. Drastic departures from the accepted ways of doing things almost always creates controversy and even invite heated criticism. Why? Because each of us, to some degree, has a tendency to evaluate a new idea in the light of our own experience, knowledge, preferences, and prejudices, rather than on the merits of the idea itself. Therefore, in an effort to escape from established habits of thought that could bias one's thinking, the reader should attempt to keep an open, receptive mind.

Ralph LaFemina's unique concept focuses on the largely unmined melodic and harmonic resources of drums. His method makes accessible new pathways of thought concerning drumset performance. LaFemina's approach, in fact, is radical, and in this interview, he discusses the why. where, when and how of melodic-harmonic drumming from its inception to where it stands today.

CP: Would you start out by explaining the basic idea behind the melodic and harmonic approach to the drumset?

RL: The idea behind the concept is that the drumset *is* a perfect instrument. Specifically, that the drumset is capable of true melodic, harmonic and rhythmic functioning. It's based on the gradual discovery which we've all been making; that there *is* something about the instrument that hasn't been touched. Something untapped.

The melodic and harmonic concept is the basis for a new technique in drumming, based on the idea of subordinating everything to the considerations of the music. That is, coordination, rudiments, movement around the drumset, rhythms, will all be determined by musical needs. And that means that the needs of the music will be met, not only rhythmically, but also melodically and harmonically.

For example, there may be a time when a drummer's accompaniment pattern, instead of being the typical repeated rhythm of the ride beat, or rock 8th notes, or left-hand offbeats, will be a series of pitches on multiple tom-toms. The drummer will be using the pitches available on the drumset in the same way pianists or trumpet players use the pitches available on their instruments. You see, all the instruments are the same. The drumset is really like a short piano keyboard.

The idea that drums are of indefinite pitch, or untuned, is a negative view of the instrument. Every drum has a fundamental pitch and an overtone series. Any well-tuned drum will blend with any other well-tuned drum and with any pitch emitted by any of the piano-based instruments.

Songs can be played on the drumset, regardless of the fact that the pitches are not the same, say, as on a piano. They don't have to be the same. In fact, the nature of a drum sound is such that every pitch is in the overtone series. *Every* pitch is in there somewhere. Therefore, every pitch blends with the drum. Also, the drum tends, by sympathetic vibration, to take on the predominant pitch in the environment. So, if the orchestra is in E, the drum will start vibrating in E at its fundamental level so that the drum is automatically self-tuning.

Another important part of the whole concept is the idea of relative pitch. The music of western civilization is based on standard pitches, where there is an absolute frame of reference so that something can be called "out of pitch." In the music I'm discussing, there is *no* absolute frame of reference. Everything is referred to itself. For example, a drumset is not tuned to the piano. It's tuned to the lowest drum in the battery. So, once the lowest pitched drum, usually the bass drum, is well-tuned to itself, then the second drum would be tuned a little bit higher. All the tuning would be done by ear. There is no reference to the piano because I want to escape the limitations of the piano. I want to escape the limitations of all the instruments that are based on the very structure of the piano.

Many people don't consider the drums a musical instrument. But, how *can* something be called a musical instrument if you can't even play a simple song on it; if you can't harmonize on it, if you can't really do much with it but keep a beat? What kind of instrument is it that can't play "Mary Had A Little Lamb"? It isn't a musical instrument because you're not playing music. At least, the way drums are being played today, you're not really playing music. You're getting as close as you can to it, but you're *not* really playing the song.

Of course, if you heard someone soloing, or playing accompaniment, you might be able to tell where the cadences were, where the volume changes were. You'll get an impression of the song. You may even get some idea where the chord changes are by the use the drummer makes of pitches or rhythms. But, you really couldn't tell what tune was being played. If all the other instruments stop, and the drummer continues playing and no one can tell what the song is, is the drummer still playing the song? There's a philosophical question for you. The best players, of course, hear the song in their heads all the time. They never lose it. It's just as real to them as if someone else were playing the song. But, nonetheless, the drummer plays as though the song weren't there.

I believe drummers should be able to play the song from the most simple and concrete, like a beginning piano student, all the way up to the most advanced abstract interpretations of the experimental jazz school. There's a whole dimension of abstractness there. If a performer can play abstractly, but you ask him to play "Mary Had A Little Lamb" on his drumset and he can't hit the right pitch sequences, then he's not playing a musical instrument. Anyone can get abstract, and take sounds

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by Katherine Alleyne

Dottie Dodgion

Don't make the mistake of asking Dottie Dodgion what it's like being a female *drummer. "I'm so tired of that," she's likely to answer. "I've been asked that a million times, and being a woman really has nothing to do with the way Ifeel about the music."*

How does *she feel? The daughter of professional drummer Chuck Giaimo, and later the wife of alto saxophonist Jerry Dodgion, music in general, and the music business in particular, have always been a part of her life.*

Born in Brea, California, Dottie Dodgion began her career in music as a singer in the San Francisco area, and worked with groups including those of Nick Esposito and Charlie Mingus.

Her career as a professional drummer began in the mid-'50s and has included work with Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, Benny Goodman and Melba Liston.

In a feature article, Carol Sloane once said of her: "Dottie's time is razor-keen, and her complementary accents throughout the stretch-out choruses are subtle, encouraging and tasteful. She is serious about music and has every intention of remaining a working musician."

She has travelled extensively. She's worked in Las Vegas, New York, Toronto, Los Angeles and Washington D. C. During the early 1980s, as part of Melba Liston and Company, she travelled to France for the George Wein Jazz Festival and took part in a U.S. Embassy tour of Fugi, Malaya and Taiwan.

Television appearances include a 1973 special taped in Hawaii with Tony Bennett, The Dick Cavett Show, What's My Line, Dave Garroway Show, *and The* Today Show.

This year finds changes in her life. Single again, she's now living in Delaware Water Gap, Pennsylvania, no longer workingfull time with Melba Liston and Company, but with a new group, that keeps her busy and has her very excited.

"It's the happiest I've been in a long time, " she shares. Dottie Dodgion at her best—still playing, still learning, still growing.

KA: Why Delaware Water Gap, Pennsylvania, rather than New York?

DD: I've lived in a lot of places, including New York, and I loved it there. It was great to leave a gig and be right around the corner from home. But I'd have to keep bars on my windows and out here you don't have to worry about that kind of problem. Here, it's like living in the country, but it's only an hour and seven minutes from the Holland Tunnel. There are quite a few musicians out here as well. Phil Woods lives just up the hill from me, and Al Cohn is 20 minutes away. A lot of times some of the musicians will drop in where we're playing, and we have a ball. So I don't feel as if I'm missing anything.

KA: Where are you playing now?

DD: I've been working with a great group. We've got Jerry Harris on vocals, Spencer Reed on guitar, Tony Marino on bass, and Richard Master on trumpet and fluegelhorn. Tuesday nights we're at a club here called the Bottom of the Fox; on Saturdays it's the Deer Head Inn with John Coates, and on Sundays we're back with Jerry Harris at the Blue Note—that's Pennsylvania's Blue Note, not New York's.

KA: When did you first play professionally?

DD: I've always said that I learned to play drums before I knew how hard it was. I didn't really take a serious interest in playing until I was about 22 years old. I was singing by then of course, and what I really wanted to do was dance, but my dad said "No, no. Dancers never make any money. They look great, but you can't make a living at it." So I never really pursued it. When I first started playing the drums, I studied for a while, but when I was younger, I'd always been involved in basketball and other sports, so I think the coordination was natural for me. A drummer himself, my dad was very encouraging, and then of course there was Jerry [Dodgion] and bassist Eugene Wright. They taught me the things I needed to know about dynamics, texture, color and discipline. And they didn't think it was strange for a woman to be playing drums.

KA: Was it strange?

DD: Of course it was. That was the early '50s, and even a woman playing piano was unusual. But the guys would let me sit in, and a lot of times when a drummer was late, I'd get to play. I spent time with so many professional musicians that I didn't have half the trouble being accepted that most women did. A lot of times, instead of hiring me, they'd hire a drummer who couldn't swing half as well, and that used to bother me. But on the other hand, at least I was accepted by them, and I got to play with some of the greats.

KA: When did you play with Benny Goodman?

DD: That was in the early '60s. We'd just moved to New York, and Jerry was playing with Goodman's band. They were opening at Basin Street East, and Goodman invited me to sit in. I didn't realize it, but he'd been trying out drummers, and I got the gig. It was my first night in New York, and Jerry asked, "How do you like New York so far?" Are you kidding? I had no place to go but down. Zoot Sims was on that band, along with John Bunch, Jimmy Wyble, Red Norvo, Carl Fontana and Buddy Childers. The singers were Maria Marshall and Jimmy Rushing. Now that was a hot band. It was quite an experience.

KA: You'd worked with Carl Fontana before that?

DD: I spent about a year with him and Gus Mancuso in Las Vegas before we moved to New York. It was one of the best years of my life. We were working the lounge area of the Thunderbird, and in after-hours clubs. I was playing day and night; that's where I really got my chops together.

KA: You also lived in Washington for a while, and as musical director of the Rouge

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and impressions and sort of be one with the instrument. But to play songs is a whole different bag of tricks. This is a big challenge for everybody, because once it's accepted, once it becomes standard, the old kind of drumming is going to become antiquated.

CP: Do you view this as an entirely new method which could take the place of standard drumming?

RL: No, I don't oppose standard drumming and I don't see this replacing what's being done in music. I see this as opening up a whole new world for all drummers. All the things that everyone is working on, and that have become important, should continue to be important—but here's a whole new dimension.

I'm not suggesting that what's happening in drumming today is bad. I think it's wonderful. There are things happening today in rhythmic coordination that astound me. There's been a real revolution, but the problem is, what to do with all those tom-toms? Well, the thing to do is to play songs on them, or chord progressions, or both. Or, play bass lines, or a solo that's not the usual drum solo, but instead, is a musical instrument solo. The drumset *is* a musical instrument and it should be used that way.

CP: How would someone interested in the principles of melodic-harmonic drumming actually go about putting it to use?

RL: To transcribe a tune, you have to go through several processes which are described in my book. You need to know how many pitches, and which pitches, are used in the tune. Even though there are 88 keys on the piano, most melodies never use more than 15 or so. Classical music, jazz, and so forth, use the full ranges of the instruments, and even stretch the ranges of each instrument, so that you're really dealing pretty close to the full piano range. But such music is a different case. For any bop head, rock tune, or Latin piece, 20 pitches is a lot. What you have to do is conceive of the drumset as a keyboard with a series of pitches going from the lowest, to the highest. For example, the bass drum would be pitch number one, the largest floor tom would be two, the smaller floor tom would be three, and on up to the mounted toms, counting up as the pitch goes higher so that the higher the number, the higher the pitch. Then we go to the cymbals. If the snare drum is the highest pitched drum and it's number nine, then number ten is the lowest pitched cymbal, and moving right up the cymbals.

After you have your drum pitches organized, and you have the pitches organized for the tune, you then assign drums to the pitches. The lowest pitch is played on the lowest drum. You might have to play the two lowest pitches on the lowest drum, or even the three lowest pitches. But basically, you follow the rule of the higher the pitch of the melody, the higher the pitch of the drum used.

Cymbals can also be placed in order of pitch so the highest pitched cymbals are to the left, and the lowest pitched cymbals to the right, gradually down the scale.

The first thing a new drummer would learn would be a simple tune like "Mary Had A Little Lamb." He'd first learn to tap the rhythm of the song alone with either hand, alternate strokes, or both hands together. After he's able to do that, I'd show him a rendition of the song using two, three and finally four pitches, which is all the tune contains. He could then move on to a five-pitch tune. Each time, the drummer would learn songs by going from the rhythm, gradually closer to the full melody and rhythm. After the song has been learned melodically, the harmonic aspect can be brought in using similar procedures. When you play the arrangement, especially after you're able to play it with feeling, the song comes alive. You start to sing it. Eventually, a drummer would know the repertoire of American music in the only way that really counts for a musician: rhythmically, melodically and harmonically.

CP: How did you come up with the idea for this approach to the drumset?

RL: It seems to have always been there ever since I could conceive of sound. There was always the pitch difference of things; the highs and lows of sound, the sharpness and dullness of it. Apparently my ear is very attuned to that. I think all drummers play melodically in their own way, to some degree. Some have become recognized artists for utilizing the melodic aspect of things—people like Joe Morello, Shelly Manne and Louie Bellson, among others.

I seem to recall, many years ago, seeing Louie Bellson experimenting with a greatly expanded drumset consisting of two or three bass drums, a series of snare drums, and tom-toms of various sizes. I'm certain he was really utilizing the instrument like a keyboard.

One of the biggest influences of my making the transition from drumming in the typical way, to this new way, was the study of piano and organ which started about six years ago for me. The whole concept of a "musical instrument" really became clear to me in many respects.

Since I've been studying piano and theory, I've been doing a lot of composing. I have plans for a whole series of books that are offshoots of the melodic and harmonic concept. Since I wrote my book, all the things I've been writing over the years don't seem so important anymore. All the coordination and rhythmic things I'd been working on for 20 years suddenly seemed like the wrong approach. Not so much wrong, but inadequate. Now, with the melodic and harmonic concept, I'm doing every kind of coordination you could imagine, and yet, every sound has a musical reason.

Some of the energy behind my book was born of anger from years of having listened to insults aimed at drummers. Drummers have always been treated as second-class citizens. The kind of image people conjure up when they think of drummers is really horrible. When I talk to people about the book, especially the theoretical aspects, they say, "No, all we want are funk beats," or, "All we want you to do is sound like Steve Gadd." I think every drummer has had his share of awful experiences at the hands of pianists and lead guitar players. But the limitations that are imposed on the drumset are just that—they're imposed. The instrument *is* perfect and complete, and fully capable of playing a song, any song. I can sit at my drums and play any song I hear in my head. And I can play it accurately enough so that a third party would be able to identify it, nine times out of ten.

CP: How do you envision the future for Dr. Ralph LaFemina and his melodic-harmonic approach?

RL: One of my goals is to make the vast literature of the piano-based instruments applicable to the drumset. Imagine that the whole world of music is there for you, and you can play the songs. You can actually sing with other instruments.

I see multiple drumsets being used routinely: soprano, baritone, alto and tenor drumsets, just as you have in the horn family. I envision the drummer being a complete and fully respected member of the orchestra. I hope someday to see multiple drumsets in every orchestra—three in a big band, two in a medium to smaller group—because now drummers have available not only rhythm, but timbre, texture, melody and harmony, as well.

I also see drumsets with at least two keyboards—the drum keyboard and the cymbal keyboard. And I see parallel keyboards of cowbells, woodblocks, triangles, and so forth. The drummer would be like a multi-

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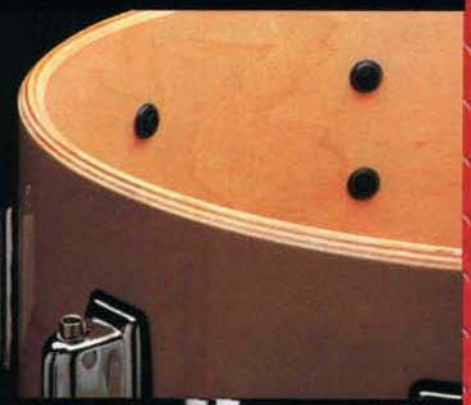
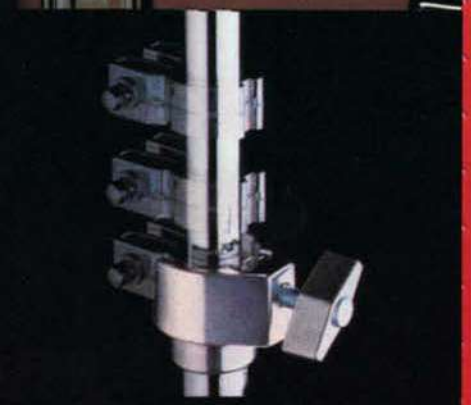
"Kim Fowley Band"
+ L.A. Studio
Bill Jordan
Rod Morgenstein
Ron Tutt
Neil Diamond
Lisa Schrock
ROGERS





Rogers: Master Craftsmen with

Joseph Rogers began making drums more than a hundred years ago. He was a master of his craft, a perfectionist and an innovator. And he turned his personal qualities into a company tradition.

To this day, the Rogers name stands for handcrafted excellence and breakthrough technology.

Take a look at just a few of the Rogers innovations that have built our reputation as the best:

XP-8 Power Shells. Handcrafted from 8 individual layers of prime New England Rock Maple for a natural wood sound. To insure maximum strength and perfect roundness, each layer is positioned with its wood grain at right angles to its neighbor. The seams are also staggered for even greater strength and consistency.

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Memriloc. A Rogers invention that remembers the exact angle and position of any drum, so you can set up and break down in minutes, without re-adjusting. Memriloc equipment features steel tubing for strength. Plus a double locking action to eliminate slippage.

Multi-stack Percussion. Just one example of the many ways Rogers mounting hardware can be used. The three arms and ratcheted joints let you place various levels of extra percussion at any height and angle.

Dyna-sonic® Floating Snare. This Rogers exclusive is famous for its response and tone. The floating snare frame keeps the snares in perfect alignment to allow for a cleaner sound.

The list of innovations and features goes on and on and continues to grow. Because Rogers drums are still designed and crafted by people who know drums inside and out; who understand the needs and problems of drummers; and who get there first with the solutions.

New Ideas.

XL Londoner 5

Individual Drums. Rogers offers a full line of drums for the creative player: standard drums, XL toms, floor toms, standard bass drums, and XL bass drums. Ranges of different diameters and depths provide an almost infinite combination of sounds. So you can build your own unique instrument – the set that's exactly right for your taste.

A Set For Every Style – Every Step Of The Way. Each set in the Rogers line-up is a unique instrument designed to reinforce the strengths of a particular style. And each set is designed for growth. Build onto them with individual additions, or with Expander Kits (pg.4).

XL Londoner 5. Deeper shells give you the potential for a drum sound with more volume and a lower pitch – plus a more imposing look.

This set has a punchy, solid quality that cuts through the loudest volume levels, providing the perfect support for modern, high-decibel live music. The audience doesn't just hear these drums; they feel them, too. The XL Londoner 5 delivers unmatched sonic and visual impact. 44-4008 (189-Black) 12x12 tom (#550012). 13x13 tom (#550013). 16x16 floor tom (#530416). 18x22 bass (#551822). Super-Ten 8x14 maple snare (#534814-191). 2 Tripod base cymbal stands (#542001). Snare stand (#541000). Supreme® bass drum pedal (#547000). Supreme hi-hat (#546001). Dual tom holder (#561200).

Londoner 5

Super Londoner

Londoner 5. Rogers' most popular
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assic that's been proven again and
gain. 43-1110 (182-White) 8x12 tom
#530212). 9x13 tom (#530213).
6x16 floor tom (#530416). 14x22
ass (#530122). Dyna-sonic 5x14
nare, chrome (#530514-006). 2 Tri-
od-base cymbal stands (#542001).
nare stand (#541000). Supreme
edal (#547000). Supreme hi-hat
#546001). Dual tom holder (#561200).

Super Londoner 5. Wider diameter drums for a bigger, more massive sound. The Super Londoner 5 has the same great feel of the Londoner 5, and it gives you a rock bottom low end that will fill any hall. It's the last word in solid construction; equipment you can depend on forever. Available in Black, White, Silver, Midnight Blue or Natural Wood. 43-1026 (196-Midnight Blue) 9x13 tom (#530213). 10x14 tom (#530214). 16x18 floor tom (#530418). 14x24 bass (#530124). Dyna-sonic 6½x14 snare, chrome (#530614-006). 2 Tripod-base cymbal stands (#542001).
Snare stand (#541000).
Supreme bass drum pedal (#547000).
Supreme hi-hat (#546001).
Dual tom holder (#561200).

Kit #1 (#44-4415) shown with Londoner 5: 10x14 tom, 12x15 tom, Memriloc dual tom floor stand, tripod base assembly, and center cymbal holder.

Kit #2 (#44-4410) shown with XL Londoner 5: 8x8 tom, 10x10 tom, and extended dual tom stand.

Kit #3 (#44-4408) shown with The Beat: 8x8 tom, 10x10 tom, and mini dual tom-holder assembly.

Kit #4 (#44-4406) shown with The Heritage: 8x6 tom, 8x8 tom, and multi-stack assembly.

Kit #5 (#44-4422) shown with Londoner 5: 14x22 bass, center cymbal holder, extension tube, three accessory clamps, and L-rod.

Kit #6 (#44-4423) shown with XL Londoner 5: 18x22 bass, dual tom holder, extension tube, two 3/8" cymbal tilter rods, five accessory clamps, and L-rod.

pander Kit #1

Expander Kit #2

Expander Kit #3

Expander Kit #4

Expander Kit #5

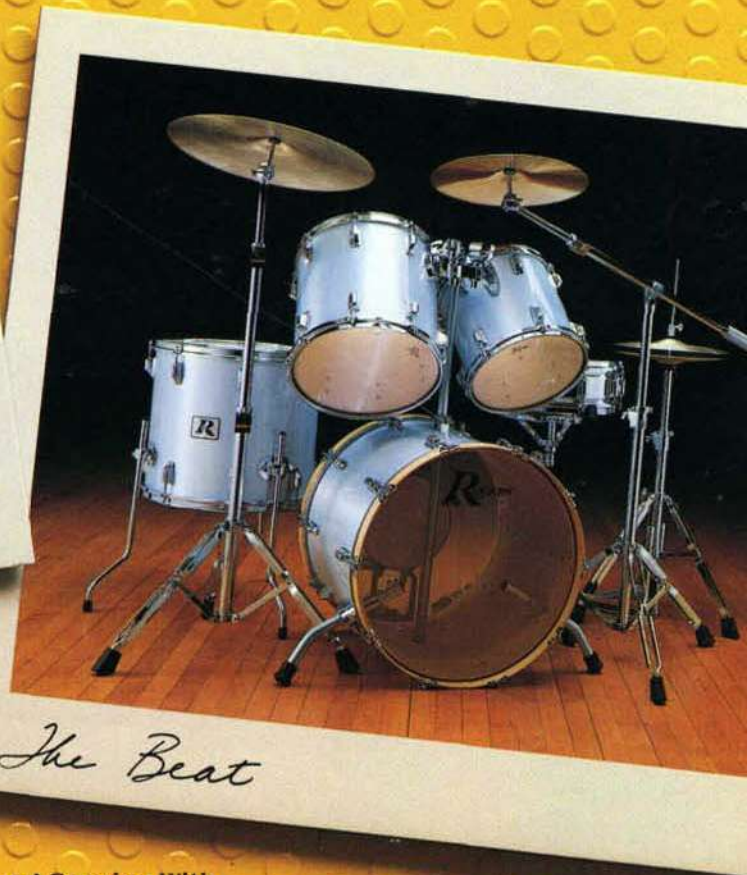
Heritage. Smaller but deeper shells give the Heritage a tight jazz sound with plenty of presence. A smaller head diameter means finer tuning ability and superior stick response, while the deep shells maintain the kind of tone you want.

Due to popular demand, we've reintroduced the classic 14" diameter floor tom and 18" bass... two drums that virtually defined the classic American jazz sound. 44-4004 (191-Natural Wood) 10x10 tom (#550010). 12x12 tom (#550012). 14x14 floor tom (#530414). 16x18 bass (#551818). Dyna-sonic 5x14 snare, natural brass (#535514-017). 2 flat base cymbal stands (#542002). Snare stand (#541000). Swiv-o-matic pedal (#547007). Supreme hi-hat (#546001). Dual tom holder (#561200).

The Beat. It sounds as powerful a it looks. Bigger, deeper shells give you the huge, solid sound needed for today's beat-oriented dance music. The set is designed with extra large hardware to take all the punishment generated by a physical, high-energy playing style.

Stands are extra wide and extra stable, with double-braced legs. All tubes and moving parts are more massive for steady, trouble-free performance. And all adjustments have memory, for faster set up and breakdown. 44-4006 (187-Silver) 12x12 tom (#550012). 14x14 tom (#550014). 16x18 floor tom (#530418). 18x22 bass (#551822). Super-Ten 5x14 snare, chrome (#532514-006).
Dual tom holder (#561200).
R-380 boom cymbal stand (#411355
R-380 cymbal stand (#411328).
R-380 snare stand (#411318).
R-380 bass drum pedal (#411347).

Heritage



The Beat

Expander Kit #6

Keep Your Sound Growing With Expander Kits. They're the most convenient way for your set to evolve. We offer six Expander Kits, each designed to complement any of the five Rogers sets. Each kit has been selected to enhance a particular area of your sound, whether it's the bottom end, the midrange or the accents.

And since all Rogers components are compatible, you can choose your own combination of add-on parts.

The R-Series. No other drums give you so many features. For so few dollars. R-Series kits come loaded with a long list of features usually found only on higher priced drums. R-Series sets are available in a choice of finishes: black (189), white (182), wine red (115), or navy blue (114). The R-380 also comes in wood grain (197).

The R-380 gives you high level features without a high price: 9-ply mahogany shells deliver a natural wood sound, and the extra large heavy-duty hardware features memory, for faster set up. All stands have double-braced legs for stability. Counterbalanced boom gives almost unlimited adjustment capability. Remo Ambassador heads are standard equipment. 41-4100 (197-Wood Grain). Throne is optional.
8x12 tom, 9x13 tom, 16x16 floor tom, 14x22 bass. R-380 5x14 chrome snare (#414514-006). Cymbal stand (#411328). Counterbalanced boom stand (#411355). Snare stand (#411318). Bass drum pedal (#411347). Hi-hat (#411338).

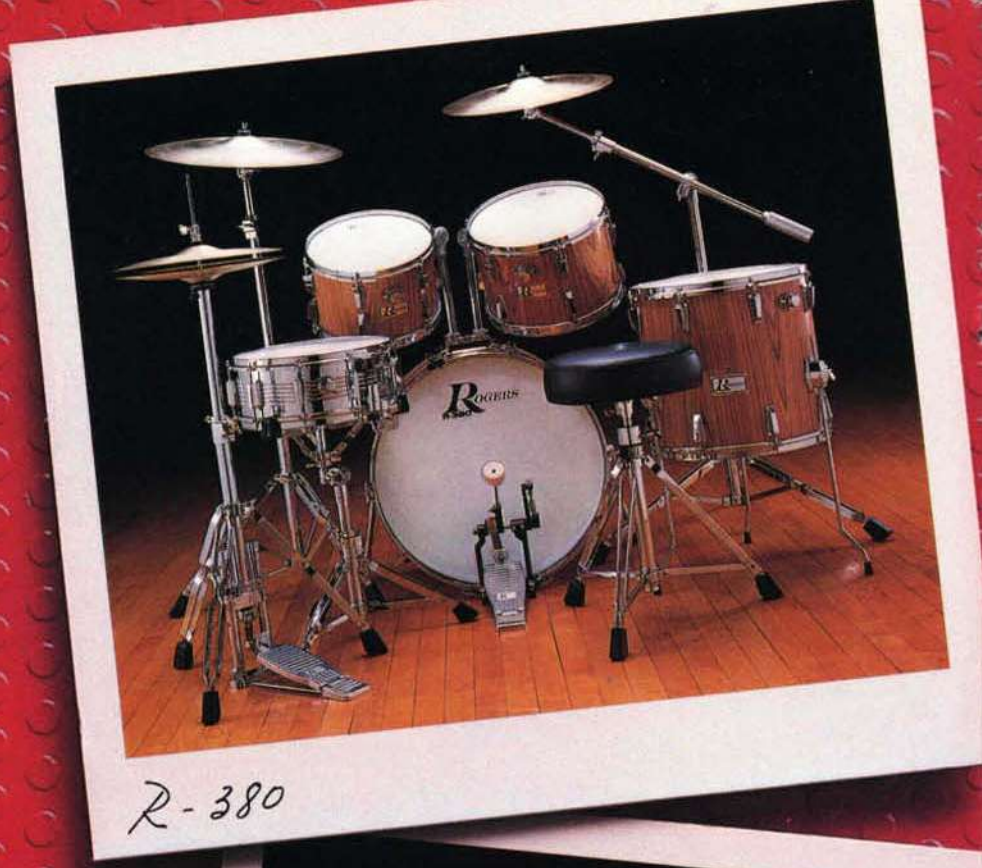
The R-360 is a five piece set built around 9-ply mahogany shells. It comes equipped with Remo Soundmaster heads and heavy-duty hardware. All stands are large and stable, but fold up small and light. Nylon bushings at height adjustment points give you smooth operation. 41-0100 (189-Black). Throne is optional.
8x12 tom, 9x13 tom, 16x16 floor tom, 14x22 bass. R-360 5x14 chrome snare (#410514-006). Snare stand (#411311). Bass drum pedal (#411341). Hi-hat (#411331). Cymbal stand (#411321).

R-380 Expander Kit. 8x8 and 8x10 toms with extended floorstand (#41-4810). Plus 10x14 and 12x15 toms with internal tone controls and a heavy duty stand (#41-4015).

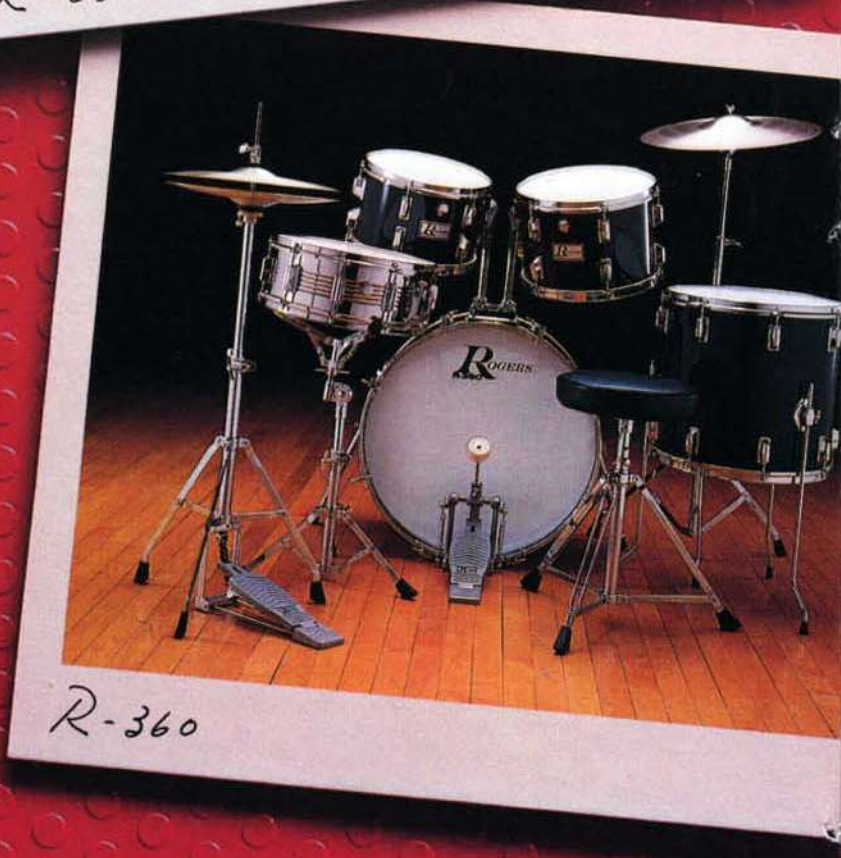
Timbales. Brass shells with natural or chrome finish. Five lug design allows space for mito-style playing. Memriloc receiver adapts to regular set. (#45-9550-017-Brass)

Bongos. 8-ply maple shells. Tunable with a standard drum key. "Sleeve adapter" allows set up on any cymbal stand with ¼-20 thread. (#45-8100)

Cases and Covers. Protect your investment. Rogers has a case for virtually every size drum. Fibre cases are steel riveted for maximum roadworthiness. Water-resistant soft covers are virtually rip-proof.



R-380



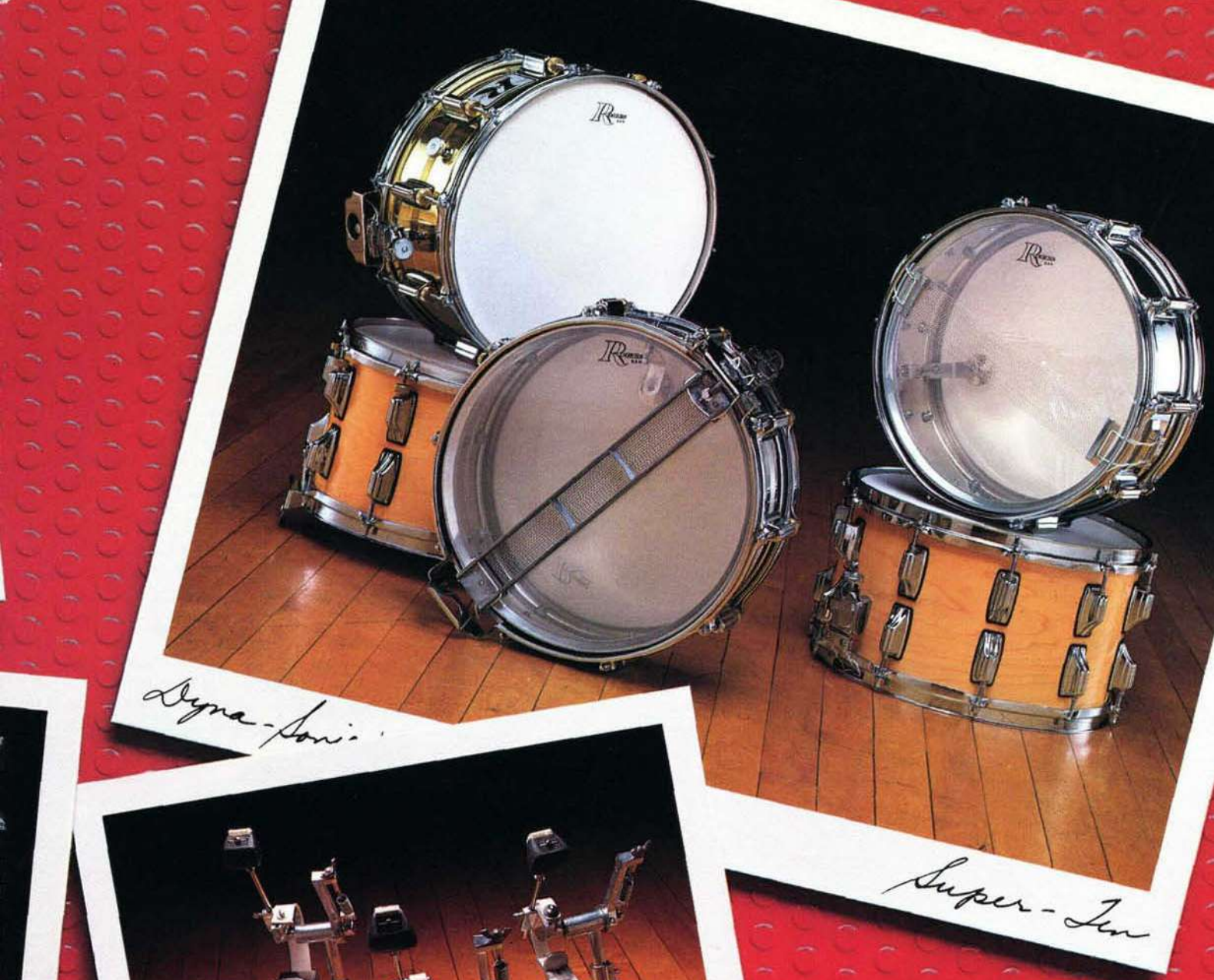
R-360

R-380 Expander Kit

Timbales

Bongos

Cases and Covers



Dyna-sonic® Snare Drum. No oth snare drum can touch it — for respons for tone, or for strength. Its snares are manufactured (not stretched) to exac seven coils per inch. Each Dyna-sonic drum has an exclusive floating snare frame that keeps the snares perfectly aligned and allows the bottom head t produce a cleaner sound. The tension screws have special brass lock nuts en gineered to prevent loosening under heavy rim-shots, and still allow fine tuning.

The Dyna-sonic snare drum is available with a brass, chrome or 10-p wood shell. Metal or wood, the Dyna-sonic is the cleanest, fastest drum you can buy.

Super-Ten Snare Drum. Easy to play and easy to tune. The Rogers Super-Ten snare drum features a dou ble trenched steel shell for power and volume. Plus snare beds designed for fat, "thick" tone. Available in chrome o in wood with a 10-ply maple shell.

Footpedals. All Rogers footpedals have a host of features, including nylon bearings for smoothness, and a foot-board pivot for solid footing, even at an angle. The Supreme features a massive footboard for the hard-hitting player. The Swiv-o-matic® has a lighter foot-board with a hinged heel. And the Adjustable Footboard Swiv-o-matic has a one piece footboard with a length ad-justment for any size foot.

Memriloc Hardware

Memriloc Hardware. Designed For ability And Built To Last. Rogers is re-wned for its heavy-duty hardware. We ake sure it can take all the abuse of tour- and still provide smooth, steady, wless performance, without unnecessary ight and bulk.

Cymbal Stands. Choose the extra sta- tripod base or the convenient flat base. mriloc clamps guarantee the same ght for every set up. Nylon cymbal seats otect your cymbals, and the fine-toothed chet tilter never slips.

Cymbal Stand With Boom. Moveable counterweight allows perfect balance. The Rogers boom stand lets you position your cymbal virtually anywhere.

Snare Stands. Memriloc ratchet and clamps let you set up fast to the perfect angle and height. Spring loaded holding arms are fully adjustable to fit 13", 14", or 15" snare drums.

Tom Stands. Memriloc hardware and double reinforced legs and braces insure stability. The holder is engineered to let you add another level of percussion.

Hi-Hat. Its smooth, stable footboard increases your confidence. The Memriloc clamp guarantees exact height for each set up. Its direct-pull mechanism gives you more accurate response. Butyrate surrounds the spring for that famous "cushion-quiet" feel.

Throne. Double reinforced legs and an amaloy seat chassis give the Rogers throne a rock-steady stability. Memriloc lets you set up in the perfect playing position every time. And when you pick up the seat, a "bul- let catch" makes sure it stays attached to the stand – until you want to break it down.

Special Hardware, Accessories and Supplies. Memriloc hardware allows you to design your kit your way. Original brand re- placement parts keep your drums looking "like new." And Rogers' quality sticks and heads help you get the most from your set. See your Rogers dealer today.

ROGERS

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keyboardist. I envision a drummer being able to play as a pianist would, providing his own harmonic accompaniment while playing the melody. At this point, I'm able to do this to some degree. Someday, I'd like to play a wedding with a drumset trio or quartet.

When I'm playing with another musician, I find myself constantly playing a counter melody or harmony with what's going on in the band. I'm moving all around the set. I'm not on the snare drum any more than I'm on the floor tom, or any less than I'm on the small toms. I'm having to really learn true ambidexterity so I can switch the ride to either side of the set. My coordination is so much improved that it's hard to describe. The coordination of hands and feet is also very different, because my two bass drums are my two lowest pitches. So, when I write the music, my bass drums are sounded rhythmically and tonally, rather than in stereotyped patterns. There are *too many* stereotyped patterns. They're like little index cards that players pull out of their pocket when they run out of ideas, or when they don't have any ideas to begin with.

I'm aware that the idea of melodic and harmonic drumming is not new. Every drummer plays melodically in his own way. It's not something that *I* have invented. However, what I *have* done, is to take the concept as far as it will go. And in performance, I've taken the concept about a quarter of the way into this largely unexplored territory.

Dodgion continued from page 57

& Jar jazz club you brought in such artists as Thad Jones, Pepper Adams, Herb Ellis and Carol Sloane. Was that a good experience for you?

DD: I did that for about two and a half years, and the music part of it I loved. I got to work with some really good artists, but I found too many things getting in the way of the music. The business side of things became too overpowering and I didn't like mixing the two. I was quite happy to go back to my drums.

KA: In 1978 you took part in the first Women's Jazz Festival in Kansas City as drummer for a group featuring Marian McPartland, Lyn Milano, Janice Robinson, Mary Fettig-Park and Mary Osborne. You later joined Melba Liston and Company after moving back to New York in 1979. Do you enjoy working with all-female groups?

DD: Not particularly. I like working with artists that enjoy their music, male or female. There are a lot of good musicians around who are women, it's just that it's very difficult to get a lot of women together who take their craft seriously enough to stick with it. I mean, let's face it, you have to be really dedicated to this business, and you have to want to play badly enough, especially in jazz, because you never make a lot of money in jazz. Male or female, you could starve to death trying, so you really have to love it to stick with it.

KA: Do you think attitudes towards women in the music business are changing?

DD: Sure they are. Attitudes towards women in general are changing. We've become more liberated and people see us differently. You couldn't really blame the guys for their attitudes towards women when I started playing. There weren't that many women out there then. And those who were, dressed in low-cut gowns and played cocktail music. You couldn't blame them for not taking us seriously. We didn't take ourselves seriously. But things are changing. I've done some work with Sandra Reeves Phillips, and in April I'll be going to Switzerland for three weeks for the jazz festival, and that's with an all-female band, and I'm really looking forward to that. I'll be working with women like Carline Ray and Willene Barton. We're all professionals, and we've all been playing for years before it was fashionable. A lot of times today women are hired just because they're women, and I don't go along with that either.

KA: You've done a lot of travelling. Have you ever found that part of the music business to be a problem?

DD: I've never minded the travelling. When my daughter was younger, I'd have to leave her with my mother, of course, and I hated that part. I've always liked to travel. I can enjoy it because there's gypsy in my soul.

KA: You have just the one child?

DD: Yes, a lovely daughter Deborah. We're very close. She's my best friend.

KA: How's your Dad? Is he still working?

DD: He's fine. He's in San Francisco, still playing. Not as much as he used to, but he's still working and looking great.

KA: How old is he now?

DD: Seventy-five. I can remember when I was young, he had all the hot spots in town. He used to play a lot of the strip joints, and in those days in San Francisco, that's where all the jazz musicians were playing. He's a remarkable man with a great outlook on life. He's never had a bad thing to say about anybody, and he was always encouraging to me as a woman playing the drums. When I played with Benny Goodman, I did everything for him.

KA: In her article on you, Carol Sloane referred to you as a "listening musician, sensitive to all with whom she shares the stand." Do you agree with her assessments?

DD: I am a listening drummer. The music really is my heart. I love it. I think more than any other form of art, music is an outlet for expression, affecting both the artist and audience. Making the music better is the thing that's important to me. If the ensemble sound is right, it thrills me to death. I don't need to solo. I love all the music, but I've always been particularly concerned with the rhythm section, because I believe very strongly in working as a team. On the bandstand we should be working as one. I don't believe that any one musician has the right to interfere with, or to take away from, what the rhythm section is doing as a whole. There may be something going on that you don't like, or that I may not think is working, but the place to discuss it is at rehearsal or once we leave the stand. We're there to do a job; to complement one another, and when I'm behind the drums, it's not to work off frustrations, it's to get the job done. I've seen so many things go on within the rhythm section that I'm really interested in one day writing a book or a column called "Inside the Rhythm Section." I've even got my ending quote: "There are those who know where the time is, and there are those who don't. And it's hell to pay for those who do, who play with those who don't."

KA: You sound happy about where you are right now.

DD: I am happy. I've been singing a little more along with my playing, and this group I'm working with now is fantastic. We work well together and we've got a lot of things planned for the near future. We'll be doing some recording and hopefully a lot more travelling. I used to worry about growing too old to play, and about money and things like that, but I'm past all that now. I love what I'm doing and I intend to keep doing it. I said once in an interview that as soon as I started playing, the music takes over. And it's true. I feel as if the music's coming through me rather than from me. Once I hear the time and place it there, I couldn't put it anyplace else if I wanted to. I have to put it there, because that's where the overall feeling is; the overall beat. It's got nothing to do with being male or female, it's got to do with the music. And the music really is all with me. That's all I'm trying to get across.

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BOB

The relationship between a city and its music is very personal, and can get as close as two friends can possibly be. Bob Gullotti and Boston, Massachusetts have been good friends for over 20 years, and a partnership such as this one rarely goes unnoticed. The Boston music scene frequently delights to this artist of unique style and flair. His approach is pure emotion, and the fluency and sensitivity he displays makes him a highly sought-after player, for any style of music.

Born in 1949, Bob started playing the drums at age 12. The youngest of three musical children, he immediately began studying with a teacher. He recalls going through a book per week, many times having six- to seven-hour lessons. "Drums were the only instrument that I heard in my head." Bob entered Berklee School of Music, majoring in Music Education, and graduated with honors in 1972. During this time, he studied with Fred Buda, Low *Magnano and later (for five years) with Alan Dawson. Gullotti's real education came not from school, but from all the musicians he's ever played with. His "teachers" include the likes of John Abercrombie, Jaki Byard, Bill Elgart, Webster Lewis, Marvin "Hannibal" Peterson, Cab Calloway, Miroslav Vitous and Rodney Dangerfield; just to mention a few. He plays everything from Broadway shows, comedians, Vegas-type productions, clinics, seminars and rock 'n' roll gigs, and still finds the time to be one of New England's top private instructors. Being a journeyman is the way Bob makes his living in Beantown; the way he makes his life is the result of an avant-garde, original free jazz trio called The Fringe. The ensemble consists of Bob, Rich Appleman, bass, and George Garzone, saxes. The Fringe has been a powerful voice on the Boston jazz scene for the past 11 years. Their excellence has awarded them four visits to George Wein's Festival productions, three Boston Globe Jazz Festivals, and in 1981, a rare performance at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City for the Kool Jazzfest. The group has released two albums on AP-GU-GA Records:* The Fringe *and* Live Fringe. *Their second album,* Live Fringe, *was hailed by critics in* Cadence Magazine 05 *one of the top LP's of 1981 and was nominated in the top 10 albums of 1982 by* Coda Magazine.

TS: Coming from a musical family, was there a lot of support when you were growing up?

BG: I had support to a certain point. During my sophomore year in high school, I started to become very serious. My older brother, Steve, was relatively serious on guitar. But one summer he did a gig on Nantucket Island, and came home with no money. From that point on, my father was negative as far as pursuing music as a career. There were some bad vibes between me and my father, because I was an absolute fanatic and I didn't want to do anything else. Getting my degree seemed important in his thinking because it meant that now I could become a teacher and be a musician on the side. In some respects I guess that bad vibes made me want it even more, because I wanted to prove to him that I *could* become a pro and make a living.

TS: Tell me about your education.

BG: I worked very steadily all through my education period. I mean, we're all still learning, but during my growth years I didn't do any school music. I regretted it, a little bit, but I'm glad that I've gotten many, many years of experience playing in concerts and clubs. I had a great opportunity while I was at Berklee to play with a fine organ player, Webster Lewis. I got to do two and a half years with him. That was my real education, because I got to play with a lot of cats. He was pretty well known and I was his little, young drummer, so to speak. I don't know why he kept me on the gig. It was way over my head, but for some reason we got along, and he dug the fact that my head was totally into playing, as was his.

TS: You've obviously had many, but who are some of your musical influences?

BG: My biggest influence has been the two other members of The Fringe. George and Rich are tremendous players, and they've allowed me to expand my own mind and abilities without any ego problems. I listen to Coltrane a lot, therefore I listen to Elvin a lot, and Rashied Ali. Coltrane was very important. You knew he was so heavy, and yet at times he emulated a very glowing, optimistic point of view in his playing. As far as drummers go, Tony Williams, Jack DeJohnette, Billy Higgins, Gadd, Bernard Purdie, and I could go on and on. Alan Dawson has been a great influence on me. What he taught me, more than anything, was the discipline. What he gave me was the ability and concentration to go after my own and get it. But, let me just say that more than what they leave musically or technically, I've been able to *grab feeling* from people. The fire of some, the depth of others, and this helps me to believe that the way I'm thinking about my music is okay.

TS: How did The Fringe come to be?

BG: That didn't happen until the very end of Berklee. I think we were all seniors when we started to session. We sessioned as a quartet, but we always had trouble finding a piano player, so we ended up doing without. Just acoustic bass, sax, and drums, and we've been together ever since.

TS: Why avant-garde music?

BG: The term "avant-garde" is a label, and I guess a good one for a certain gender of playing. The Fringe, in some respects, is original jazz. We never consciously thought, "Okay, let's play avant-garde style." We actually started off playing be-bop and some post-bop things. As the years went on, we never played much with a piano or guitar, therefore things would be able to stretch outside of forms a little easier—sometimes by mistake and sometimes by allowing ourselves to explore. The next thing we knew there was a sound developing. It's very free, but it's also very disciplined and difficult. As you try to develop playing free music, you strongly see the need for the development of the struc-

by Tim Smith

GULLOTTI

lured music.

TS: Designing and creating your own voice is essential for the success of an artist. What are your thoughts on developing a sound on the drums?

BG: The development of an original sound on this instrument is very, very complex. It all has to do with getting a discipline for yourself and the depth of yourself. Being able to concentrate *on* the music, rather than what *you're* putting into it. My sound developed as the group's did and vice-versa. As our minds got heavier into the music, I had to be able to get deeper on my instrument.

TS: Was your own development a conscious one?

BG: Yes, I think it was very conscious development. I was very concerned with doing something different as far as the touch and flavor of it. You know, we all learn a lot of technical things and the instrument can be taught very technically, but if you can somehow just have a direction of your own growth pattern, your own style and ideas seem to unconsciously seep through with different things you play. More and more, those were the kind of things I focused in on and tried to expand. Just about anything any of us has played, someone else already has. It's the sound you produce that has to be unique. It's also the most difficult thing to achieve, improve and teach.

TS: What do you think about when you play?

BG: Actually, I try to play unconsciously. When I play, I'm very capable of almost thinking nothing about the instrument; just trying to play with the music that is above the group.

TS: So what do you do to achieve that sort of mental state?

BG: That's a tough question to answer. By reaching for a mental attitude that whenever you get on the stand the music is the most important thing. Eventually that attitude becomes a consistent force. Let's say my kid was real sick. What I would do, in order to make that part of my music, would be to play for him to feel better. When my father died, I played for him for two months like he was the only one in the audience. It somehow would make the music as pure and honest as it could be.

TS: With The Fringe you play in a lot of concepts, colors and textures. What makes you think in those terms and how do you relate and teach that to a student?

BG: I believe the reason I can think in those terms is because of what has developed with The Fringe. We know each other so well, both musically and personally, that our ideas and musical explorations are welcomed and allowed to be totally and freely expressed. We find ourselves latching on to like, "Man, that was really dark colored," and expanding on that. Sometimes we, as a unit, think "fiery red," and that feel and intensity will emit from the group. It's absolutely emotional, and that whole sound can be unbelievably exciting. As far as teaching a student to play free and conceptually, it's most difficult. It's not tangible. It's not a lick or a sticking. It's as much, if not more, *mental* placement of the music as it is physical. You *do* need chops to be able to execute what's in your mind. You're always trying to *create* a sound. That's why it's so hard to teach. It's such an individual thing. Music is art and we should be able to paint a picture. I might have a student play in a particular place in his mind, like he was on top of a mountain looking down over a river. Or depict a scene from a day in his life and recreate it. Or, even more simply, try to play some shapes on the instrument—circular motions, angles or squares. Concentration and the development of the mind is absolutely utmost in playing free music.

TS: Tell me about your drums.

BG: The kit I use for most gigs is an old set of Gretsch. I use an 18" bass drum, a mounted 8 x 12, two floor-toms, a 14" and a 16". I'm using an Eames snare drum, and I alternate that with a 1945 W.F.L. mahogany snare. Right now I'm using the Eames more and more. It's a beautiful instrument. Cymbal-wise I'm using Zildjians. I just got a new set of K's at the factory and I'm flipping over them! They're really so individual. I use 14" hi-hats, a 20" ride, an 18" crash ride (all K'S), a 20" thin swish (an A), and also a 35" Paiste gong in D-flat. I have a small endorsement with Mandile Dhakabellas slit drums. For heads I use straight ahead white coated Remos, and for pedals I use an old Gretsch *Floating Action* and a D.W. 5000. Overall, I like my equipment to be as simple as possible.

TS: Where is drumming going commercially?

BG: As far as in the studio, commercially, it's very mechanical. I'm very disturbed about it, actually. The industry has always put a real specific role on the drummer. We've always been known as "keepin' time, keepin' time." I think that it has gotten so sophisticated, that the time has gotten more important than the music. The drummers that can play the time real machine-like and good, are the ones that are going to become very rich. I'm not putting that down, so to speak, but I'm putting down the direction of the instrument having to play that kind of role. In other parts of the world, the drum plays a much more important role and hopefully, in the long run, things will change here.

TS: Where do you think the art of drumming is headed?

BG: I don't believe that there's anyone who knows that answer. It has to be the development of all the players getting older, and being able to look back; taking what the players did before them and after going through the period of emulating it, hopefully finding their own new voice. I think drums have developed, probably more than any other instrument, incredibly over the last 20 years. Enormous drumsets, new devices and pedals, electronics—it's all going by so fast. It's almost hard to hold onto your own.

TS: Are we moving into an electronic age, or is all this just a fad?

BG: No, I don't think it's just a fad. It's much more than that. It's a development. I don't know how things will turn out. No one does. Music goes in cycles. Right now we're in a very fast one. But there will come a cycle when another type of music will become popular.

TS: So, what's going to survive?

BG: Art will survive.

TS: What do you look for, or like to hear, from other drummers?

BG: Probably more than anything, interaction between the other band members. I like to hear a drummer listening, pushing the band and having some control over the dynamics. Mainly being able to listen and react to the other players.

TS: Do you think listening is the most important thing a musician can do?

BG: Yes. When you really learn to listen to what you're a part of, and *not* thinking technically, you're thinking of the music. And the minute you're thinking of what that music is creating, then it's art.

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Carr continued from page 17

stage. They still haven't met the band. That night was so crazy and I was nervous, so much was happening that the opportunity wasn't right. Looking back, it would have been just as easy for them to come back and meet everybody.

"One of the great things about Gene, Paul and Ace was that they made me feel like part of the band right away. Our senses of humor were on a par. Things we find absurd and funny are similar. We all grew up in the same era with the same influences and it was a lot easier than it could have been. They went out of their way in every aspect that you could name. We all like the same kinds of things in songs and music. There was respect for my musicianship from day one and a co-respect for each other. If someone makes a mistake for example . . . well, here's a story from the audition. When I auditioned I knew the songs better than they did! We played through the songs and something would screw up and I'd look up and say, 'You're supposed to do a double repeat here,' or whatever it was. Even from the first day this was happening. I already felt comfortable enough to where I could tell them what I was hearing that didn't make it."

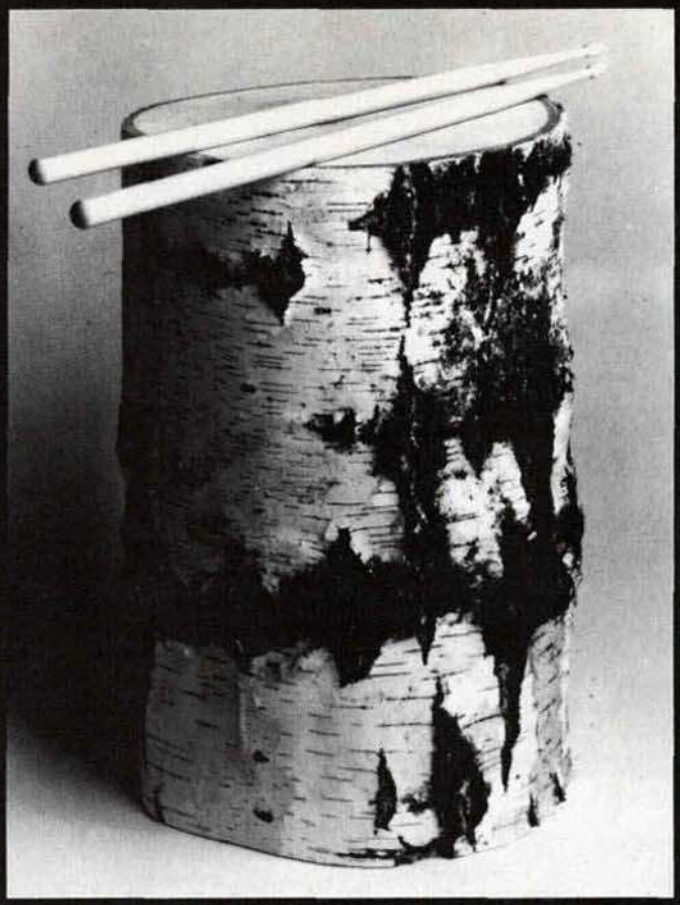
For most young drummers, the first encounter with the recording studio is an eye-opener: "So *that's how they do it!"* In Eric's case, the revelation had a corollary: *"Why* do they do it that way?" Eric explained: "The thing I never liked about playing in the studio was the drum sound! When you go into the studio as a kid and you don't know anything, they tell *you* what to do with your drums. Through experience, I've learned that's bullshit. You tell *them* how you want your drums to sound and if it's at all possible, you get it. If not, you compromise. But early on I'd walk in and I didn't know what to do. 'Well look, Eric, there's too much ring on those toms and snare. You've got to tape them down.' 'But I like it that way!' 'No, I'm sorry, this is the studio. It's okay for live but . . .' Well, this is okay for certain applications but I prefer the live sound and the live stuff. That was what I didn't like about hearing myself in the studio. I'm never 100% satisfied; I always hear things I could have done better, but you can go on forever that way. You have to draw the line somewhere. I have enough of a handle on my playing that I don't get mad at myself if I don't hear a lot of tremendously complicated licks going by. I know that I can't do it. It's not the type of playing I do so I don't beat my head about it. With me, the feel has always been the most important thing. Because I play other instruments, when I play drums, I just don't play them as time keepers. It's hard sometimes to get the people you play with to understand how you're hearing things, because they don't necessarily understand what drums are for except to keep time and do a fill at the end of every eight bars. I don't hear it that way. I'll think about the vocal or a certain part that's going by in the bass, or a chord thing, and I'll put a crash here or figure in the middle of a verse where it doesn't necessarily belong. I think that's cool—doing something that you don't expect to happen because it makes it a little different than everything else.

"You can be pulled or pushed by the band. It's real hard for me, still, in the studio. Live you can manage. It's a whole other thing acoustically because you're pretty much in control and you go for it. In the studio everything is so much more precise that you really feel any little ebb and flow.

"We use a click. We use the Linn just to set tempos. I'll work with it to get the feel to lock in a bit and then we usually go for it without it. It's programmed from the booth. I don't know who else uses the Linn." When assured that many, many recording bands and artists use them, Eric expressed some relief. "I'm glad that you mentioned that. To me, it's personally humiliating. I hate the fact that I have to use it. I guess it's because I'm assuming that everyone else has their time spot on."

The hard rock genre is a well-defined style for a drummer to work within. I wondered how he managed to satisfy the form and still chart his own creative path? "Yeah the forms *are* set; the conventions *are* all there. As a player, what I try to do, obviously, is play what fits best in the song. It's a band with everyone contributing advice and ideas as to what works better for the music. I just try to add something a little out of the ordinary, but not necessarily complex. The difference is where I place the emphasis." Mentioning the ride out in the song "I Still Love You" on the *Creatures of The Night* album as an example of this, Eric went on to say that a lot of the interesting juxtapositions that occur are because "my repertoire of fills is, well, I have a certain amount of things that I can play, so I will find a way to make it fit in the song." These were ideas that you had lying around? "No, not necessarily. In other words, I'll fool with these things, think them out in my head, or a lot of times, something will just come out while we're playing and I'll use it. I try to be as effective as I can with the fills I do because I'm not very technical. The fills aren't either. I'll play what feels right to me and if something comes out that I hadn't intended, it usually works and I get a really spontaneous feel. There's a lot more anger, a lot more feeling, and a lot more energy involved because it just came out, rather than me just concentrating on a part.

"Most of the time, we'll do a lot of takes in the studio. This is because, arrangement-wise, we might want to change something or I might do fine three fourths of the way through something and then blow it. You know, sometimes you just get mind



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blanks. It happens to everybody. Or I may do a take where it's not exceptionally good but I might have done a great fill, by accident. So we'll do it again, for insurance, but the next time I'll remember that fill and do it consciously to make sure we have it there. We do splice things together. I hate it to be that way. I wish I could get a take straight through with all the best fills in it but, because of the way I play, it's not going to be perfect. I accept that fact. One of the assets to the imperfection is the energy. There's more there than if I was playing letter perfect, to make it sound like everything else that's out. There's a little more rawness that I like. Let's go back to the Stones. They're un-tight but they've maintained their identity over the years. As long as the feel is there and the groove is there, they go for it and you don't mind if things are a little off someplace. You don't care. What counts is the overall feel. That's the way I feel about playing."

Eric joined Kiss with high hopes, but was immediately faced with the uncomfortable fact of the financial and critical death of the first album he played on, *The Elder.* While rock music is emblematic of change, this radical departure from the Kiss formula was not accepted as anything but a bonafide disaster by fans and band alike. "With *The Elder,* we tried something completely different because there was a new player in the band and it was time for a change. Everybody felt it but I wasn't so sure about it. I think we went overboard doing a concept album; something so alien to what we should have been doing. *We* loved the album and we're proud of it. Ironically it came out exactly the way we wanted it to, which was the biggest fault. It was so different and conceptual from anything Kiss had done before that the fans who were there already didn't understand it and got scared by it. And it didn't do anything to get new fans. It certainly didn't help as far as airplay was concerned. Hard-core Kiss fans were a little confused because the band had tended to start moving toward the pop side in the last two albums, *Dynasty* and *Unmasked.* Gene and Paul will verify that it was also a matter of having too many people around you start to tell you what you should be doing. Because you're very successful, you sort of lose your sense of who you are. Friends start to tell you that you should move towards this because it's what's happening. You hear enough of that and you start forgetting who and what you are, and you start to cater to what's out there. It's dangerous. You run the risk of not getting any new people to like you and you run the risk of losing the people who love you. Fans look up to you as a big brother and they don't want you to change. So the album was a disaster. The music stands up though. I had a tune on that album, "Under The Rose," which was all my music and all my melody. The album succeeded on every level except financial success, and it hurt the band credibility-wise.

"There was more involved too. The cutting the hair was something we only did for *the Elder tour,* if there was going to be one. It was a transitional thing, along with dropping the platforms which I was 100% against. At the beginning of *The Elder* I was 100% against that album. Here I am just joining the band and I'm expecting to do a heavy metal album. I wasn't comfortable. This is not what I play.

"It was hard also because it was the first time I had ever done professional recording and I hated the drum sounds. I couldn't be inspired by them at all. The drums were tuned studio—very tubby with the top head on the snare very loose and with a lot of padding on it. Because of the way I play, I need the snare tuned tighter to kick back because I don't do it myself. I rest and lay the stick right on the head. I have a very linear way of thinking of drum sounds and it's a bit of a handicap. As I do more and more albums I get more and more flexible. The way I want to hear drums is John Bonham style. I want to hear that live, ambient sound. I want to hear that kick drum sound like a cannon and the snare sound like a gunshot. That's the way I always envisioned drums sounding.

"I love these drums. They're Ludwigs that belong to a gentleman named Shep Lonsdale. He's working fulltime for Toto now. They were put together piece by piece through his travels to pawn shops and music stores. The sizes are 10", 12", 14" and 16" toms on top and an 18" floor, with two 24" kick drums. They're all double-headed except for a circle cut out of the kicks for miking purposes. The heads are clear *Ambassadors* on all drums, and on the bottom, I believe, clear *Diplomats.* We're using the RIMS system on everything but the floor tom which is set on big pieces of foam under each foot. The drums are floating, basically. The snare is a wood Yamaha, 6 1/2" deep. I set up low so I can't use a really deep snare. I use some kind of frosted head on top. The recording kit is cut down a lot from what I use on stage. The stage kit I use is not totally in use until my solo. I use 16" and 18" medium K. Zildjian crashes and a 24" ping or medium ride Zildjian. I lay off the bell because I ride so hard that the whole cymbal starts to rock and I get a lot of wash. It's a nice, pingy ride. I have 14" hi-hats—nothing spectacular."

Eric described the intensive care that went into bagging his drum sound. "At Record One in Van Nuys, California there was a rehearsal room that had a 40-foot ceiling and was about 60 feet long by 30 feet wide. There were padded panels on the wall but it was mostly live. The floor was like office tiles—very hard. I was set up on a small piece of rug in front of one of the short walls, facing out of the doorway and about three feet away from it. This door-

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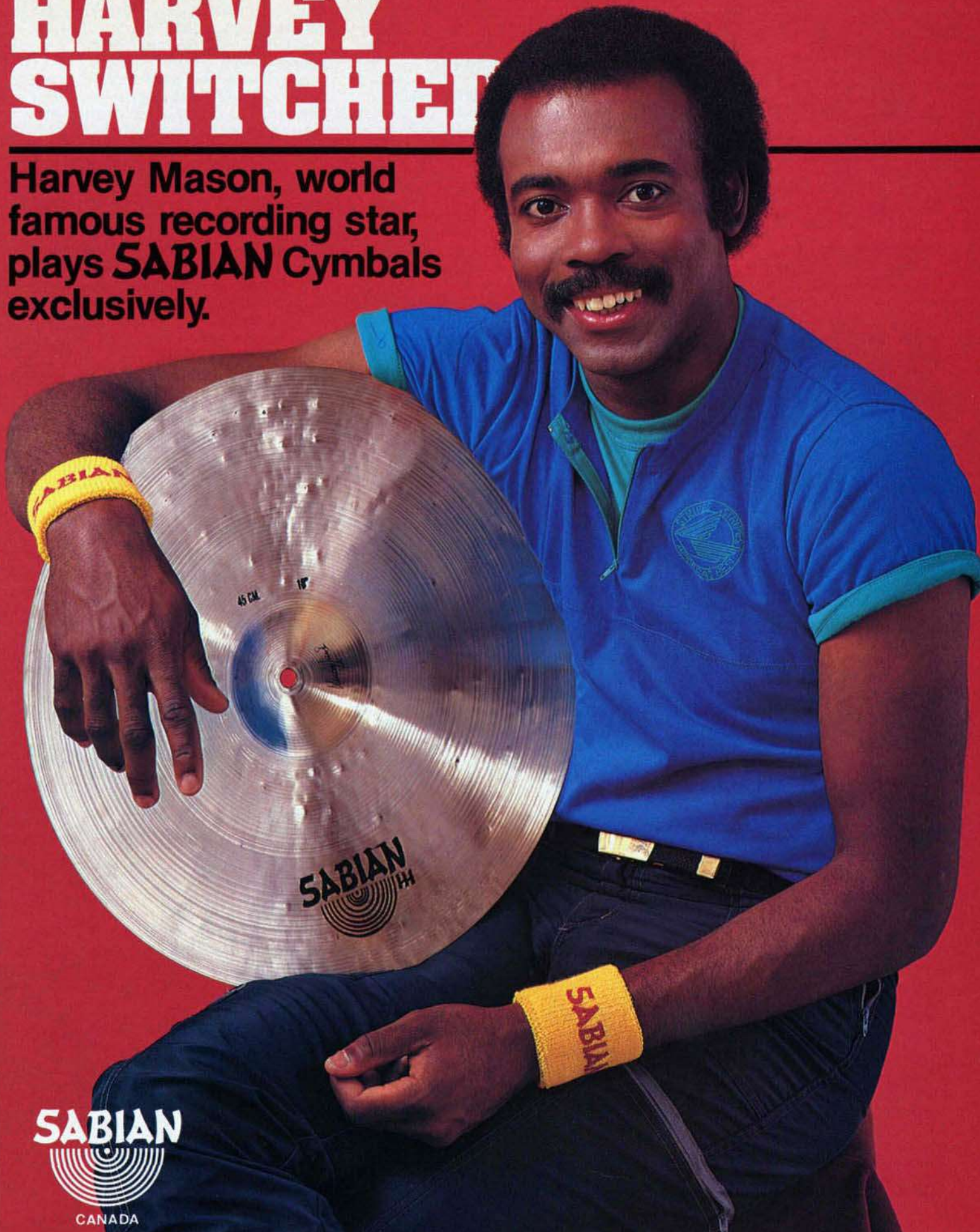

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way led to a smallish anteroom with a very live bathroom sound. We wanted the brightness of the small room and the air of the big room which gives you a lot of bottom. The other guys were in the studio, so we were doing this with headphones for sound isolation. There were mic's behind me in two corners of the big room set 20-feet high, and two mic's, head high, set ten feet in front of those. We had close miking on all the toms on top only. The snare was miked on top, on the bottom and inside. The hi-hat was miked separately but not used separately—we basically used the room sound. The cymbals were miked with two overhead mic's and there was one mic' in front of the kit about two feet into the smaller room. The kicks were miked inside. The low end was picked up by the head-high mic's. The room was just one of those magic rooms you stumble on by accident. We were looking for that Zep sound, a lot of power in it and we actually got more low end than we could use. The sound didn't completely get on the album because it was pushing so much air and was impossible to contain. We couldn't put anything over it without washing everything else out. The song you hear it best on is "I Love It Loud." That's me doing double kick in unison plus this super low end. The only thing I would improve on over *Creatures* would be to get a close miked sound and mix it in with the ambient sound to better control it, especially on the kicks, and get the punch without the wash that loses the attack. On the new album the plan is to do the drums at the Record Plant in New York and go for the close miking, then take the tracks to Record One in L.A. and run them through the speakers in the same room to get the ambient sound. On paper it should work. If it does, it'll be a killer."

No Kiss concert is complete without the drum solo, which Eric describes as fun but terrifying to perform. "Everybody's looking at you and if you make a mistake there's no one to cover it up. The way I approach soloing is by trying to make the best of what I'm able to do. I try to make it, above all, entertaining. I've heard lots of solos by guys that were great, but drum solos tend to get boring, even if you're a drummer and understand what a guy's doing and that he's really hot. Things become exercises with no continuity. I believe that solos should build to a crescendo, and once you get there, that's it. Leave it there; end it. I keep continuity by starting the solo in a basic feel. As the riser is moving out I play time, and once the riser stops I drop the time out, keep the kick drum going and I start doing something that's reminiscent of "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" type of drumming or the thing that Ringo did on *Abbey Road,* but with half time on the kick. It may not be technically fantastic but it's interesting and something the audience can follow right away. That means a lot. You don't want to dazzle them with speed but also bore them to death. Once they're following you, you take them one step at a time. The word 'pattern' is the key. I have a general framework that I work from but its different every night, content-wise. It always gets to a slow fill down the toms and the real dramatic things on the floor tom. Then it's a cymbal crash and then I start on the snare, building up with a single-stroke roll to a speed where I feel 'that's it' and I go into a freeform thing. That's the only time that I do anything that's un-patterned, whatever happens. Not too long, or else it's boring, and then into a double-kick pattern. When I end this, there are a few more flourishes and then I stop and go for my first bow. Once I've got the audience there, I go back again and do another double kick pattern with all the effects—I fire the cannon in time to the solo. The last quarter of the solo is me plus effects to heighten the whole thing. I love that. The solo is structured for maximum effect and I've gotten lots of compliments from people in the business—other drummers and fans who've seen lots of other drummers soloing. The classic thing is, 'Usually drum solos are so boring but I really like yours because it's entertaining.' "

Undeniably, Carr's playing boasts considerable voltage and I wondered how his style would lend itself to maintaining intense volume and still allow him to play with intricacy and finesse. "Well, you have to be realistic about certain things. You really *can't* be a basher and do really subtle technical things. Even if you *could* it wouldn't work because the range of dynamics between the loud bashing stuff and the subtle stuff would be too great to make any sense. It couldn't be picked up in a concert hall. If you can do subtleties at a higher volume, I'd like to see it. Actually, Lenny White I can mention—he's a hard hitter. I went to school with Lenny. I remember conversations we had and he would tell me that all that AM radio stuff was garbage. 'If you want to learn to be a drummer you have to listen to jazz.' I listen to him now and I wish I could play like that. Obviously we've been playing the same amount of time and he's years ahead of me as far as versatility and knowing his instrument. The thing I like about him is that he *feels* real hard and plays with a lot of rock influence. He does little things that you don't expect that fit so perfectly into the song. I respect that."

Life in the now is fairly unclouded for Eric and there are few bumps in the groove toward the future. "First off, I don't see it happening, but, if it ended tomorrow, I think I've maintained enough of the mental attitude I had before I joined the band so I could handle having to start over. I'm definitely in a better position to do that, but I don't fool myself into thinking that doors are just going to open. You hear too many stories of once big people that are

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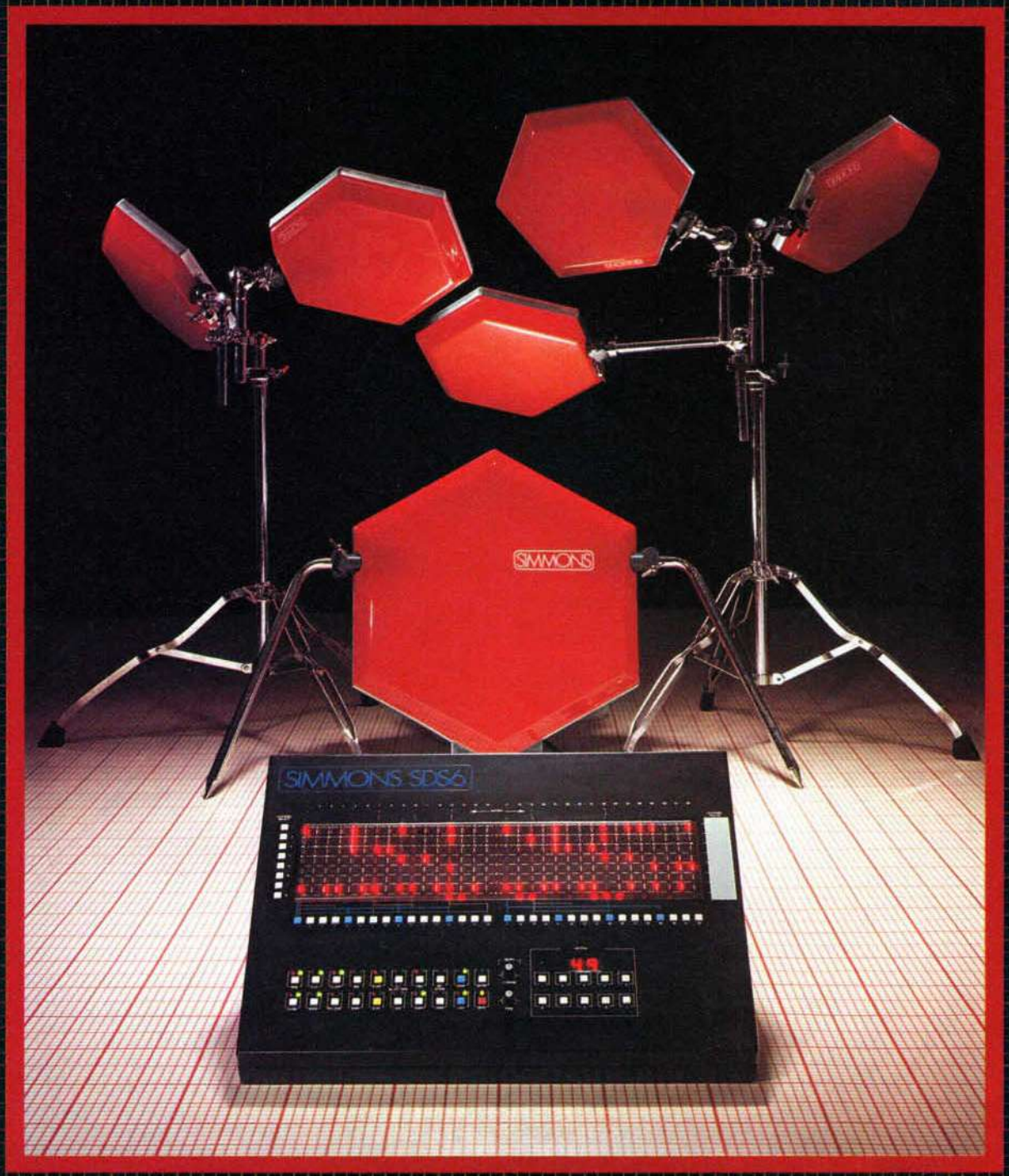

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nowhere and can't get a job. I would work on my own material, either to be recorded in this band or as a solo project, something like Stewart Copeland did with Klark Kent. To me, he's one of the most innovative drummers that I've heard in years. Most drummers in rock are filtered-out versions of everything that happened in the '60s and '70s. Copeland came out of left field with all these unusual rhythms and a great sense of feel and time. I saw him and was astounded. They're a magic unit that you don't get that often. Live, he plays five times more than he does on record but never once does he get in the way. He's tasty and never loses the feel even though he's all over the place.

"The solo thing is something I've been thinking about for years, even before Kiss. If I do it while I'm in the band, I'll do it under a different name and put a picture of me on the album. It's more or less an exercise for me to get out any energies and ideas I have that might not fit with Kiss. I'm not saying it'll be great. It might be rotten, but I want the chance. If the band ended I'd work in that direction anyway. I'd put out feelers to find a band to work in and I'd probably take advantage of the fact that I'm out of make-up, but that's very fleeting. I could handle, with a good degree of sanity, *not* having it because it's been so quick that I haven't gotten too spoiled with it to where I couldn't turn around. I can enjoy eating at McDonalds. I'll still walk around in raggy clothes. I don't care. Even though this might not be the right image, I do it for my own head."

There are many drummers who love music with all their hearts but, when approached by fans, discourage them from a musical career with well-meant tales of difficulty and heartbreak. Eric refuses to drive a wooden stake through anyone's hopes.

"When I meet fans, and parents of fans, and they ask whether they should get drums for their kids, I'll tell them, "Look, it's something that they can always have, they can be proud of it, and it will give them a direction and something to do. They can earn money, even though it's only on a part-time basis. I believe in the possibilities of music. All I ask is that nobody take my job! If you really want music, do it all the way. You'll have to be ready to be kicked around a lot because it doesn't happen overnight. I'm a 15-year overnight success story. If Kiss hadn't come along, I don't know where I'd be right now. What kept me going was that I loved to play. On stage I could forget for a few hours that I was broke, and get immediate gratification from the audience. It was worth it. So be prepared and don't give up."

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I'M STANLEY SPECTOR. WHILE I HAVE NEVER SET FOOT ON THE CAMPUS, NOR HAVE I SAT IN THE SAME ROOM WITH MY STUDENT, I HAVE MADE THE DEAN'S LIST. THE FOLLOWING LETTER IS FROM THE DEAN OF A MAJOR UNIVERSITY.

Office of the Dean

Dear Mr. Spector:

I wanted to make an opportunity to tell you how much I appreciate the work you have done with Mr. R—, a student in the College. The College is designed for highly motivated undergraduates who work in a variety of academic areas, including the performing arts, computer science, pre-law, pre-medicine, environmental studies and a host of others. Mr. R— is one student who has made very responsible use of the flexibility he has in the College. I remember the day he came with the idea to do an independent study with a percussion instructor in New York and to do this study through the mail using audio tapes. I must admit that I was somewhat skeptical about both the content and the method of what he was proposing, but after having conversations with him and with Mr. S—, the Director of the University Jazz Ensemble, I decided to approve this unusual project for academic credit. As time progressed and Mr. R— shared with me the voluminous correspondence he was having with you, and with reports from Mr. S— about the remarkable progress that Mr. R— was making, I became convinced that this is one of the best out-of-class learning experiences that any of our students have had.

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All of this is to tell you how impressed I am with this project and with your involvement with Mr. R—. I want to express my appreciation for the work and time you have given to this outstanding and deserving student.

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Signature of the Dean

The student involved received four academic credits a semester.

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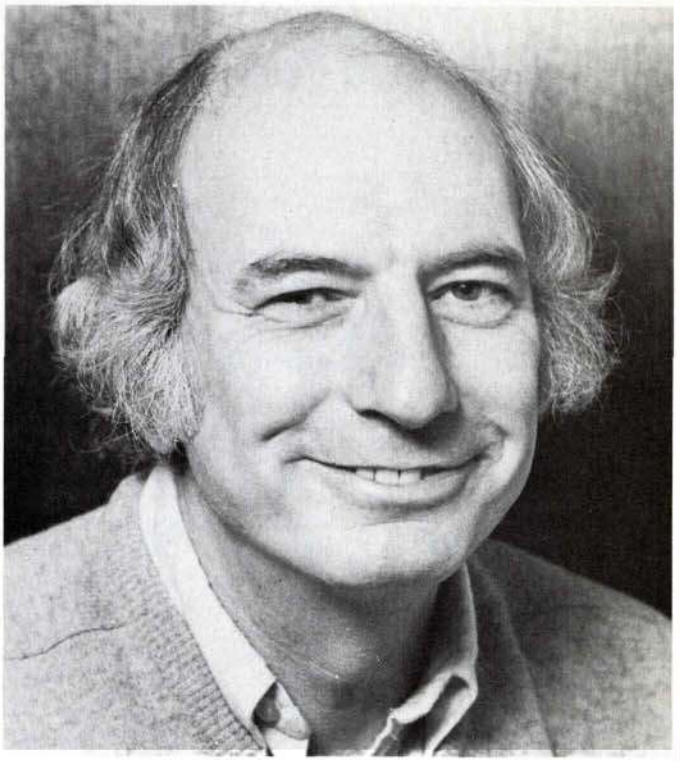

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by Simon Goodwin

The Other Guy's Set

A drumset is a very personal thing. There are so many variables: the number of drums, sizes, make, heads, tuning, relative positions, types of cymbal and the heights and angles at which they're set, the pedals and hardware. Unless a drummer has deliberately set out to duplicate someone else's set, no two drumsets will be the same. Every drummer has a unique approach to the set, so consequently, he'll always sound best on his *own* set.

However, because of the stage space and set-up time required for drumsets, it's sometimes necessary for two drummers to use the same set. This happens when more than one band is using the stage and there's not enough space for two sets and not enough time to change the equipment as the bands change. Amplifiers, keyboards and drums often have to remain where they are and be used by both bands. Compromises can sometimes be made. If, for instance, the keyboard player feels very strongly about not using any other gear but his own, and not having anyone else use his stuff, you might end up with two sets of keyboards on stage, cutting down space even more and leaving no possible room for another drumset. If anybody feels so strongly about not sharing gear, it's best for everybody else concerned to be prepared to compromise in order to allow things to run smoothly.

The choice of whose equipment to use is often dictated by circumstances. If there's a resident band and a visiting band both playing on the same night, it's logical that the residents' gear is used because it will already be in position. If yours is the set being used for the gig, your only worry is making sure that it's not abused by the other player. It's usually quite easy to come to an understanding about the way your set should be treated without seeming too fussy or dictatorial. There is not a lot of harm that can come to drums if they're played in the normal way by a normal drummer. Broken or dented heads is the worst that can befall. Cymbals can be a problem. A cracked or dented cymbal, although still playable, can be spoiled for the owner. It's worthwhile getting the other drummer to look over your set with you and check that nothing is broken, and agree to pay for any subsequent breakages. Getting money out of him later could be very difficult, but by getting him to accept responsibility, you're focusing his attention to the fact that your set should be treated with respect. Likewise, remember to treat the other guy's drumset as you would your own. *If you* break anything, it could be both embarrassing and expensive. Be grateful for the use of the set. Thank the other drummer before and after using it. And even if you hate it, and swear you would move heaven and earth to bring on your own set, never say anything nasty to the other guy.

When you use the other guy's set, it's sometimes possible to make a few minor adjustments to suit yourself, if time and owner permit. Positional changes which would be unavoidable if the set were being moved or collapsed are usually acceptable, but people do not like to have memory collars on stands altered. *Always ask permission* to change anything on the other guy's set. And if permission is not granted, just grin and bear it. Don't change things against the owner's will; it only causes bad feelings and makes things more difficult if you have to share another time.

Even when you're allowed to make adjustments, you can find that on a strange set, the adjustments you want are not possible. Different types of hardware offer different options for positioning. The more modern hardware is generally better in this respect. But there are some drummers using 20-year-old sets which offer little or no height adjustment on tom-tom holders. Cymbal stands from this era do not go as high as modern ones, so you may find that when you go to raise a cymbal, you'll lift the top section of the stand right out. I recently had to use a set in which the snare drum stand had only two good legs—the third was hanging loose on its rivets. The snare drum had to rest against the rim of the bass drum. No possibility of adjustment there.

Re-tuning should only take place under exceptional circumstances. It's the easiest and most tempting thing to do. You know that with a few turns of your drum key you could make this drum sound quite decent. *Resist the temptation.* Remember that the other guy probably spent hours getting the drum to sound like that. It's his drum and it's right for him.

Of course you can sometimes make a few substitutions. Bringing your own snare drum and hi-hat is a popular move. I would also suggest a bass drum pedal (unless, of course you are satisfied with the one there), and a stool. If you're comfortable from the waist down, and in a well-balanced playing position, it's much easier to relax and play well.

Before assuming that you'll be able to make any adjustments or substitutions, check on the playing times for the gig. It often happens that there's no time available. One band is expected to be on stage and playing within 30 seconds of the other band finishing their last number. When this happens, it's a case of coming on, sitting down and playing just as if it's your own set. When this occurs, you have to use the other guy's set exactly as is. Try to check it out *before* the performance. Make a mental note of differences which could cause problems, and be prepared to compromise slightly in your playing. We nearly all have little things we do for which we rely on the relative positions or the response of our drums. If you can anticipate coming unstuck on any of these, think ahead and simplify. Watch the drums more than you would usually. Lifting the sticks a bit higher while you're playing can help too. Getting caught up underneath rims and cymbals is the most common hazard when using a strange set.

There are advantages in using someone else's drumset. The most obvious one being that you don't have to take your own set to the gig. Another, more positive advantage, is getting the opportunity to try something different. We all try hard to get our sets exactly as we want them and, money permitting, we succeed to the extent that we would rather use our own sets than anyone else's. But at the same time, it's always good to keep an open mind. When you're forced to use something different, there's always the chance you may discover something new or different which you really like.

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by Charles M. Bernstein

Steve Mitchell

Steve Mitchell is one of the San Francisco Bay Area's busiest studio drummers. He can be heard on, among others, the last 12 Charlie Brown TV specials, the theme for John Chancellor's news program, Carfield the Cat and many commercials. He has played and recorded with Joe Henderson, Blue Mitchell, Herb Ellis, George Marsh, Van Morrison, The Coasters, Joy of Cooking, Esther Phillips, Lou Rawls, Sally Kellerman, the Smothers Brothers, and the Joffrey Ballet.

SM: Music was always a big part of the family. I played in the family band. I come from a Quaker family, living on a self-sufficient farm where we didn't have electricity until I was a teenager. We had a real basic, simple, homelife. All I've ever tried to do in my music is remember what it felt like to play that music, and recreate that feeling in the studio or concert hall. It's a warm groove in a comfortable family-music situation, and I'm really sorry people don't do it anymore. Now everyone gathers around the "tube," and they don't get that kind of experience.

I tried a variety of instruments, including piano. I settled on drums at 11 years old, mainly because it fit into the house situation. I got directed into recording at a very early age. Pat Ballard, who wrote several popular songs including "Mr. Sandman," lived in my hometown of Troy, Pennsylvania. He heard me play when I was 11, and I started doing his demo tapes when I was 12 years old. I used a snare drum, kick drum, and hi-hat.

CB: Were you self-taught?

SM: Basically, but I also had an exceptionally good teacher, Fred Blood. I started to study with him when I was 12, back in 1956, in Elmira, New York. He was a master, but so far ahead of his time, and so out of place in that area, that after about five years he left town. He was a tremendous influence. I studied with him until I was about 16. I used to go all over Pennsylvania looking for teachers. During this same period of time, I was also going to New York, catching what jazz groups I could, and studying with various people. I also studied in a drum corps and played in a drum and bugle corps. I went to Duquesne University from 1963-1967 and received a Bachelor of Science degree in music education. While at school, I studied with Bill Schneiderman in Pittsburgh.

CB: When did you come to San Francisco?

SM: In 1967. I came out here with a band from Pittsburgh called the Skyliners. We had a hit, "Since I Fell for You." I worked with them and we did a record that was co-produced by Bernard Purdie and Luther Dixon. Bernard and I worked together on and off on this record for a month, and it was fantastic. He'd play drums and I'd play drum parts that he'd give me. Sometimes he'd play congas, and I'd play drums and vice versa. It was a real eye opener for me, because in Pittsburgh I had gotten into the circuit of making soul hits.

When I was in college, I found that in addition to doing club work I could make good money doing recording work. I did commercials and jingles, and got into a kind of hit factory making local soul hits. We made 25 or 50 dollars a date. Through that session work I got in touch with the Skyliners and did a bunch of touring. Part of one of our tours included a trip to San Francisco.

In '67 I filed for, and got, a conscientious objector's status because of my Quaker background and philosophy. I had to take two years off for public service. Garreth Loy, Hale Thatcher, a light projectionist, and myself had a travelling show called Hermes. We performed at colleges, the San Francisco Art Museum, the Opera House, and various other places. We had a giant percussion set up, liquid light projection, and electronic music. Hermes was a very mind expanding experience.

CB: How did you break into the recording industry in San Francisco?

SM: I joined a band that was composed of musicians from the Electric Flag. The band was called Sweet Apple and we got an advance from Columbia, and released an album in '68. The band disbanded, and a wonderful bass player, Bill Rich, got me to play on Jessie Davis' first album. I went to L.A. and did that album and several others.

Around 1970 the music business was really crumbling. I got burned out on the music business. I took a job teaching at the Wilmington's Friends School, a Quaker school in Wilmington, Delaware. After a year I came back to San Francisco. Teaching music is the only thing I've ever done besides playing music.

The difficulty I found in the early '70s was that I was working towards making records, and the constant conflict I had was that whenever I played music that I considered good, the record companies would say it wasn't commercial enough. I found myself constantly trying to water down my art to make it commercial enough for the pop market. As a challenge, I said if they want something commercial, I'm just going to make commercial music for money, and make art music for myself. So I've made sort of a dual life for myself.

CB: Would you describe your philosophy or approach to the art of drumming?

SM: I see all art as being a representation

of nature. I think musicians bring nature to the city. In the country a lot of people don't need music quite as desperately as they do in the city. It's our duty to bring nature to people, and percussionists are unusually fitted for creating environments. I think of a lot of my percussion music as being environmental music.

CB: How do you define the term "environmental music"?

SM: Like setting up a mood. If you walked into a jungle and sat down quietly for half an hour, pretty soon the birds and animals would start to come out and surround you. That is an environment. Art is a reflection of nature, including the human heartbeat, all the cycles and rhythms of the planets, and the ocean. The world is a very rhythmic place. The rhythm of nature is not a circle, it's a spiral, constantly changing, always slightly different, and that's what I see in drumming—the permutations. You can take a theme and every time you play it, you can vary and move it. That's motion that involves emotion, and it can move people to a more relaxed state, or a more excited state. You can affect them psychologically.

One of the biggest roles of musicians is to transform people. It's very similar to having a religious experience in church. I'd like to think that even in the funkiest nightclub, people get that magic, which to me, is a religious experience of the music.

CB: Who are your main influences and why?

SM: I put Philly Joe Jones and Art Blakey high on the list because of the sense of groove they inspired in me. When I heard them live, and on recordings, I began to see a way that they can make a nightclub or a concert become electric. Their performance creates an undeniable transformation of the audience and it just seemed like the walls are vibrating. They lock everyone in and have the effect of taking people from very diverse backgrounds and creating a unity. In a club you can have an army general sitting next to a street junkie, and the two of them will be tapping their feet and experiencing such a unity that it brings an audience together. It's a real tool for world peace and understanding. If people could experience music together and play music together the world would be a better place.

Another drummer who always really impressed me is Jimmie Smith. He played with Lambert, Hendricks and Ross, and he did a lot of organ trio playing on the East Coast. In a sense he was like Philly Joe. He has a very intense fire, a command of the instrument, and the ability to make quarter notes come alive. He'd just play straight quarter notes on his cymbal, and within eight bars the entire club was perspiring and tapping their feet.

I'd also like to mention Al Jackson for simplicity, and Bernard Purdie for his groove and his approach to the business of

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Where Drummers Meet

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You'll meet drummers like **Simon Phillips** and **Joe Morello** in every issue of MD. You'll find out what they're doing, what they're thinking about, what they're playing and how they're playing it. From the established pros to the up and comings, you'll meet them all every month in Modern Drummer.

music. He has a way of promoting himself. There is a duality in commercial music. You need chops for playing the drums, but you also need "jaws" for handling your business. You need to be aggressive, and I don't see that as negative. I know a lot of musicians, particularly jazz musicians, who have a very negative business sense. They think that if you do anything that's taking care of business, it takes away from your art. I just don't see it like that. Great artists have always raised their own price because nobody else will.

CB: Was there anyone else you wanted to mention that was an influence?

SM: Salvador Dali. I like to take people from their established frame of reference and throw them a curve. Dali did that with visual art. Sometimes in a very avant-garde fusion piece I may use a Dixieland lick. In other words, the styles of music that don't generally fit in that idiom. I'm also a firm believer that we have to take sound at its most basic. That is, pure sound, so that when you hear a splash cymbal you don't necessarily think Dixieland.

Dali said that if you want to be the most advanced avant-garde artist, you go backwards; you study the traditions and find out what has been done before. So for me, this means that if you want to study funk and be the most avant-garde funk player, you should go right back to the Agbaja, Ghana and Nigerian drumming, because that's where it all came from. You'll find rhythms to draw from that you might otherwise not find.

CB: Would you describe the recording industry in the San Francisco Bay Area?

SM: We're still riding the aftermath of the late '60s where groups like the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, and the Quicksilver Messenger Service came out and turned the established New York, L.A., and Nashville scenes upside down. When I was recording in New York I was in awe of the extreme professionalism, but it became a little cold, calculated and a bit formulized. Out here it's very relaxed and very unformulized. Musicians have a good time playing and stressing their uniqueness.

Musicians who follow the course of only playing scales, practicing just to be a super reader and professional, often times lose out on the basic spirit of creativity. San Francisco is one of the most creative environments in the world.

In the Bay Area there are probably a half-dozen studio drummers who make enough to qualify as full-time studio players. It's a limited scene, and it requires a creative approach to business. It's impossible in San Francisco to make a living doing freelance album dates, but, if you include jingles, television shows, kid's records, and fill-in with demos, you can make a good living. But it does require pursuing every possible area within recording. I've always attributed the success I've had here to the fact that I go at a New York pace in San Francisco. When I came here I was amazed at how laid back everybody was.

CB: What advice do you have for drummers who want to break into studio work?

SM: My first advice is to take everything you can get. If you are already a competent drummer, offer yourself to everybody's demo. What you need to do is put as many hours as possible into the studio, where you are hearing your sound and getting the experience of playing, not with the stimulation of an audience, but with the thought of stimulating a future audience. You're going to be in people's living rooms and car radios.

Most drumming that I do is very simple. Very rarely do I use polyrhythms. Very often I'm stuck playing quarter-note patterns. Hitting a closed hi-hat on "1" and "3", the snare drum on "2" and "4", the bass drum on "1" and "3", and that will be my entire part.

A lot of drummers approach the instrument by exploding; constantly reaching for new polyrhythms, speed, complexity and expansion. I approach studio drumming as contraction or imploding. In other words, you're drawing in and giving presence to the few notes that you're given to play. If you have three quarter notes on your snare drum every five bars, you've got to give them as much depth, body, emotion, and feeling as you possibly can.

To develop this technique I studied with Chuck Brown, who is a very popular teacher in the Bay Area. He's taught Dave Garibaldi, Michael Shrieve and Terry Bozzio. He gave me some tremendous practice material of slowing the metronome down to its slowest mark, 42, and playing a note every two ticks, going through the first page of *Stick Control* and spending five minutes on each exercise. The goal was to give presence and uniformity to the right and left hands so that you couldn't hear the difference.

Doing the studio work that I do, I very seldom get to play a fancy fill or a big, hot lick. In my jazz recording I do, but most of the time I'm faced with trying to make music within a minimal framework. If you're going to be playing backbeats on the snare drum, take half-an-hour a day and turn your metronome on at a very slow marking. Then study just the backbeat. No hi-hats, bass drum, fast rolls or fills around the toms. Analyze and develop that backbeat so that it's so fat, and has so much presence, that when you go in to record it just knocks people out. You can impress people with presence and simplicity as much as you can with speed.

Drummers are the ultimate accompanists. On the whole, the success of getting work is to make other people sound good. The main role of a studio drummer is to give presence and a good feeling. If you've

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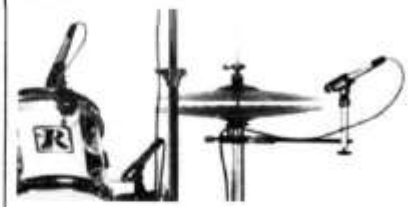

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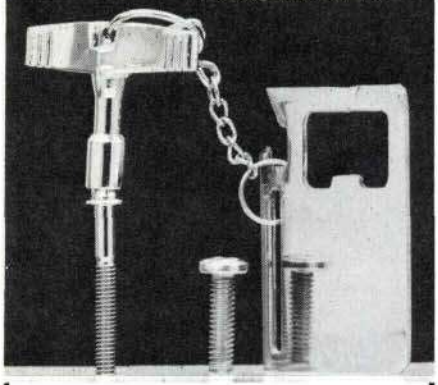

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It is really important for drummers to understand the variety of language that producers use. Someone from 1930 is going to have a different definition of what "boogie" means than someone from 1980. The same word will mean different things to different producers. Look at them as individuals and know where they are coming from. Part of your success in studio work is understanding people, being tolerant of them, understanding their language and knowing what they are looking for. I advise young drummers to play with people of all ages, and all types of gigs. Even if you're successful and making a lot of money playing with a famous rock group, you've got to take some weddings, ethnic gigs, anything, because you are going to broaden your understanding of the musical experience and language, and then you can bring it into all forms of music.

CB: What size drums do you prefer in a studio situation?

SM: I start with a basic set up which consists of an old Slingerland 5 1/2 x 14 snare drum with a calfskin head, a Yamaha *9000R* recording set with a 14 x 22 bass drum, and 8 x 8,8 X 10, 8 x 12 and 10 x 14 toms. In addition, I take along three extra tom-toms, four extra snare drums, another bass drum, and a large variety of cymbals.

CB: What type of drum heads do you use in the studio?

SM: Currently, a blue Evans oil head on the bass drum. It seems to have a real nice roundness, plus a good punch. But you have to be careful with that head because if you use a wooden beater you'll end up with a wet leg. I use a hard felt beater. I like the calfskin for the snare drum because it has a certain natural mellowness. With plastic heads on the snare I was always using a lot of muffling and unnatural tuning. With calfskin it sounds ready to go 90% of the time. Sometimes, because of the weather, I've got to tune it a little, but it's got a natural muffling. Calfskin is very easy to record with because the overtones tend to be in the mid-range or lower.

CB: What do you use on the toms?

SM: Remo CS black dot heads. I like to use bottom heads, but for most of the jingle dates I use singleheaded toms. The *CS* heads seem to be fine for television work.

An important fact to remember about picking all these various heads and equipment is that studio speakers are deceptive. You go from the studio into the control booth and listen on those speakers and everything sounds fantastic. But the ultimate test is what it's going to sound like coming out of a $100.00 black and white television or a car radio. In fact, I use 3" speakers to check out my drum sound.

CB: In a live situation what kind of heads do you use?

SM: Very often, for any kind of rock gig, I use the same set up as I use in the studio. Sometimes I'll pull a bit of the muffling off the drums. When I'm playing jazz I use the standard double-headed drums with Remo *Ambassadors* on the toms and bass and a *Diplomat* on the snare.

CB: Do you use any unique muffling techniques in recording situations?

SM: Kenny Hopkins, a former engineer at the old Wally Heider's in San Francisco, turned me on to a muffling technique that we used with white-coated heads. Then we adapted the technique over to CS heads when they came out.

First, make sure your tom head is evenly-tensioned to the tone you want. Then take a drumstick and lightly hit the drum head about half an inch from the center of the head. Take the middle finger of your free hand and touch the head very lightly, much the same as a guitarist would touch his guitar strings to get a harmonic, and go around the edge of the black dot. As you're tapping the head, and moving your finger around the circle, you'll find a spot where the harmonic opens up a half step or goes down a half step. In other words, you can move your finger back and forth, and you'll find that at a certain spot you'll be getting, say, an A, and then an A flat, and then an A again. You then cut a 1" x 1" square of gaffer's tape and you place it directly over the spot where you find this cross-over harmonic. Continue to cut off the gaffer's tape squares and carefully press them on top of each other until the clashing harmonic disappears. I generally end up using about six to eight squares on each tom. It tends to eliminate the dissonance in the upper harmonics in the head and reinforce the fundamental. This means you'll get a good clean tone. It's something that makes engineers very happy.

CB: How do you muffle your snare drum?

SM: I use chamoise leather. I usually buy a 6" x 6" piece and roll it up into a cylindrical shape, then put the chamoise right along the inside rim of the snare drum so that it rests on the head. Then, using one tiny strip of tape, I put it over the center of the chamoise to keep it in place.

CB: Do you have any pet peeves concerning engineers and producers?

SM: One pet peeve I have, when dealing with some engineers, is the over-miking of drums. Occasionally the technology tends to rule engineers' thinking, and they become so engrossed in it that they lose sight of the magic of artistic creation. At one jingle session I had 25 mic's on my drums! I think it was the worst my drums ever sounded. It was an impossible situation. The engineer gave me the old standard line, "we'll fix it in the mix." I heard the tape later and it was as bad as it originally had sounded. The mic's were cancelling

and phasing each other out and my drums sounded like cardboard boxes.

I'd say my biggest pet peeve is with producers who don't understand the fragileness of the musical experience. In trying to get perfection out of parts, certain producers will do as many as 90 takes. Part of the problem is that some producers don't have a musical experience of their own to rely on. Their decision of whether or not a track is good is based on whether every single note of the kick drum is exactly with the click track, or every single guitar note is exactly in tune. They listen to each note rather than the overall effect. It's like missing the forest for the trees. When a producer takes too much time on every little point, the musician's attention span tends to give way, and if you have to play a commercial 90 times, the last 85 are going to be wasted. Anyone going into production should understand that timing is very important. If a producer wants a successful studio experience, it's the work beforehand that counts.

My advice to drummers getting into recording is that you have to have stamina and endurance, and be able to hang through the weaknesses of all these people. It's a matter of being very persistent, understanding and tolerant.

CB: Given the ideal situation, how do you like to have yourself recorded?

SM: I like to record in a nice large studio with one mic' on the kick drum, a snare mic', hi-hat mic', one over the concert toms (8" and 10"), one over the mid-range toms (12" and 14"), one on the floor tom, and two overhead mic's to pick up the entire set. Now that's pretty heavy miking, but that set up will create a nice studio sound that's real good.

Still, one of my favorite ways to record is just one mic', overhead, near the middle of the set. This way I can totally control the entire balance of my sound.

CB: Are there any recording sessions that you've done that you are particularly proud of?

SM: I'm particularly happy with the music that Ed Bogus put together for a show called *Racefor Your Life, Charlie Brown.* The show has very little dialogue, and I get to play some nice grooves with the animation. It came off real nice, and the drums sounded beautiful.

CB: Do you have any goals or innovations that you'd like to contribute to the art of drumming?

SM: I feel that we're heading into a period where percussion is going to be what strings were for the symphony. Many primative cultures have developed extremely advanced percussion ensembles and I think that Western culture, America in particular, is heading into a percussion phase. We're going to have large percussion orchestras. There is a need for live, organic, acoustic music in everybody's life. People need to have that connection with their heartbeats and nature, and the religious experience that the drums convey. The number-one role of drummers is bringing people a mystical, peaceful experience. People need us, and drummers are developing right now for this new phase of music. People need to know the next beat is going to be there.

One of my goals is to form a percussion production company that would bring together a large group of drummers from all of the various styles, using different combinations of these very talented people and making music that's strictly percussion for film and television music. Later we could move into another area, where we could make video discs of our performances. Drumming is such a naturally beautiful visual art as well as an audio art. I'd like to contribute to this vision of having drummers get together and raising our own consciousness and consequently opening the doors for more composition from some of our better composers and from ourselves. Groups like Max Roach's M'Boom and Mickey Hart's Rhythm Devils are just beginning to open the door in this field. What I see for the future is drummers getting together with other drummers and forming a renaissance and a development of this ancient art and bringing it into our culture so it becomes a respected musical entity.

I had the opportunity to do a film score with Johnny Rae and the late Cal Tjader. The three of us just improvised; it was fantastic, we played for a large part of a wild life educational film. We just laid it down with no overdubs.

CB: Group playing is wonderful, because as soon as you interact with others, you, as an individual, can come up with ideas that you couldn't possibly have thought of by yourself.

SM: Right, bringing drummers together will create this, and until we start getting together as units, we're not going to inspire the faith in composers, and we're not going to inspire the ideas in ourselves. In San Francisco, Barry Jekowsky had formed a percussion ensemble bringing symphony, jazz, rock and ethnic specialties together. After only three concerts, at least a half-dozen new repertoire pieces have been added to the percussion.

The primary reason I play would be the wonderfully warm, satisfied feeling that I have in my soul when I play. It's become as important to me as food. I play almost every day, even if there aren't any other people around. When I'm playing, I feel like I'm having a religious experience. Someone once asked Charlie Parker what religion he was; he said "musician." When I play with other people I feel this amazing ESP and multiplying of energies where the sum of three musicians is 90. On a broader scale, I feel that I am passing this religious experience, and the unity of rhythm, on to everyone who hears it.

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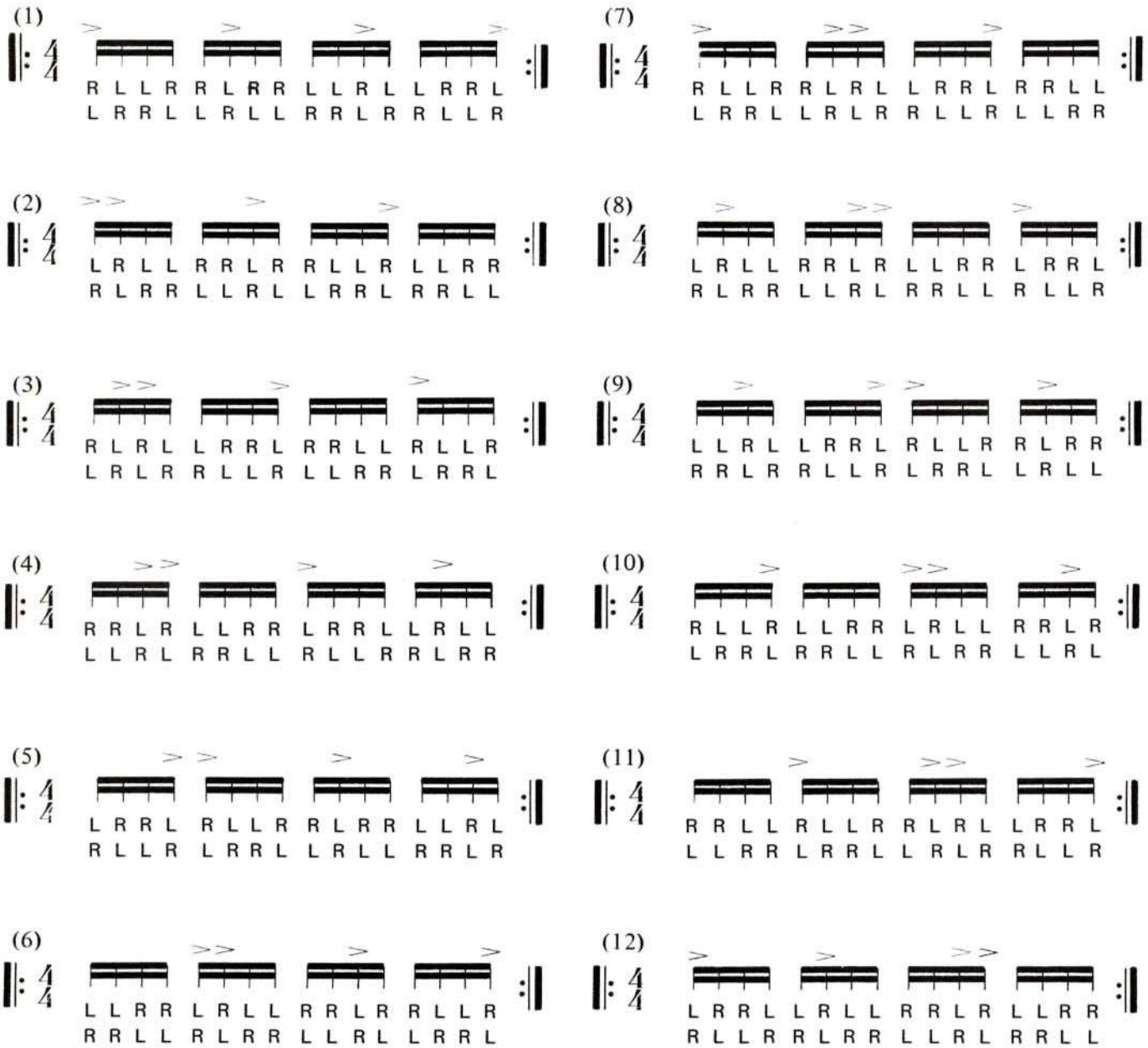

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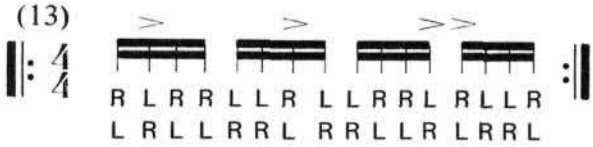

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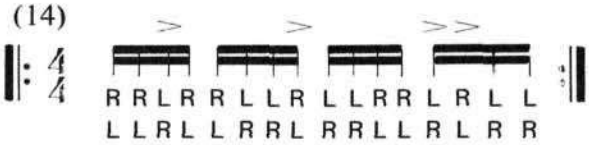

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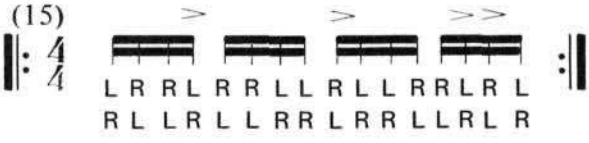

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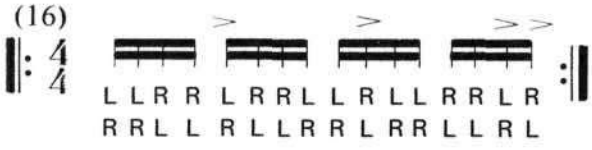

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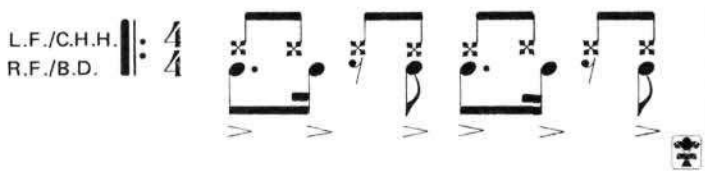

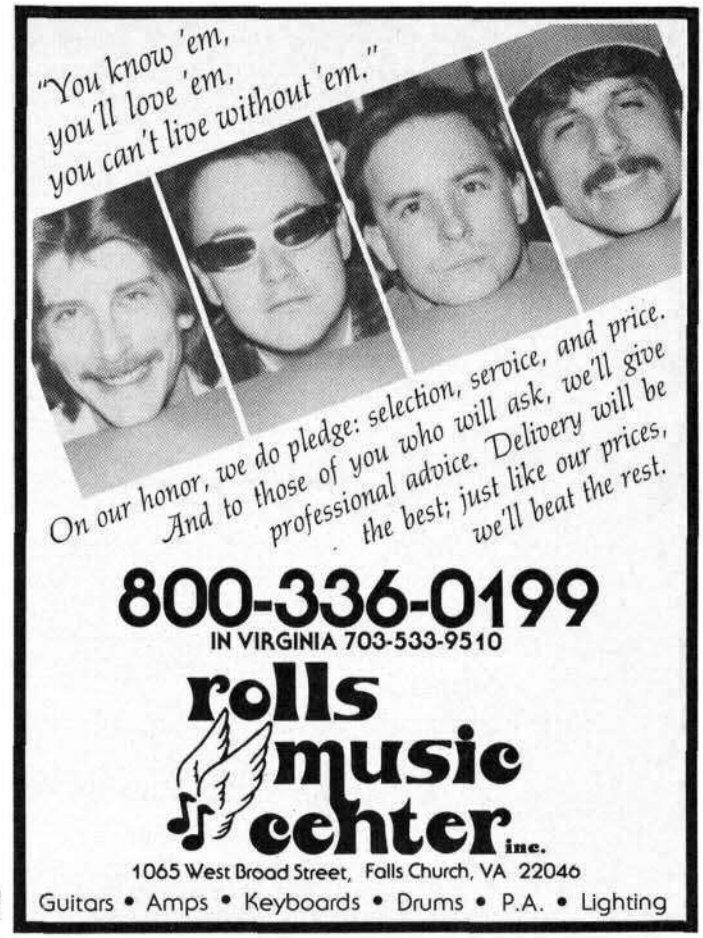

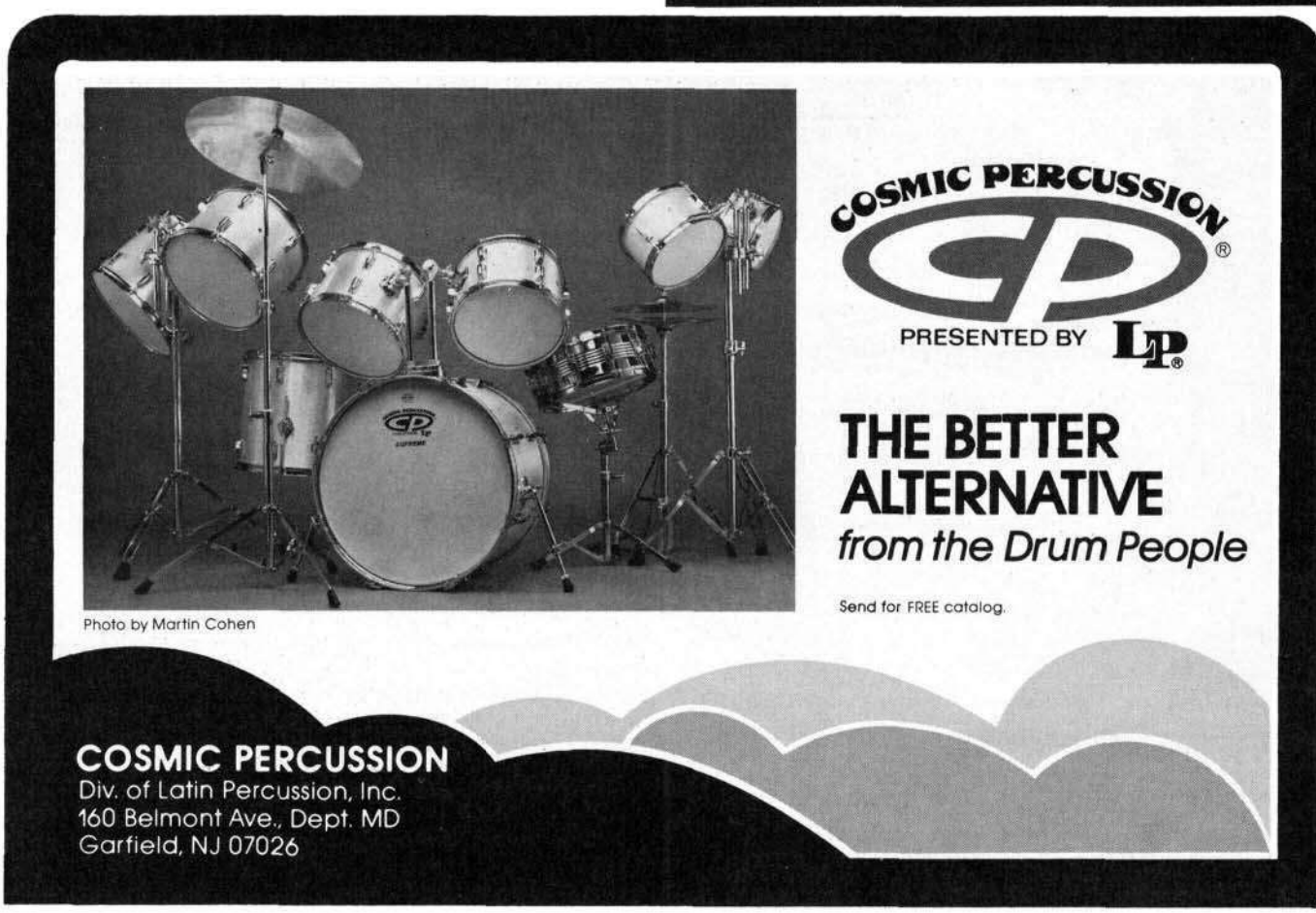

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Carmassi continued from page 21

ESG: How did rehearsals go for you?

DC: Real well. We rehearsed at both Nancy's and Howard's houses in Seattle. Howard has a four-track studio, and everything we did went onto tape, which is a real luxury. So we made demos at his house. It was really, really nice.

Within a period of one week, we were able to learn and put down seven tunes. It really didn't take us very long, because we treat it so professionally.

ESG: I noticed that at one point you guys managed to record two cuts a day in the studio with Olsen. That's pretty impressive.

DC: Well, it's really not out of the ordinary. I mean, it's not like it's everybody's first album! We were real organized going in, so we just went in there and banged 'em out. The arrangements weren't rehearsed to death, and we never had to push hard. It all came naturally.

ESG: Did Ann and Nancy or Howard ever come in with charts for you?

DC: No. Ann and Nancy usually come in with a cassette with just an accoustic guitar, and sometimes a bass, and a basic groove. The band arranges everything after that, which is really nice. Everybody gets input that way.

ESG: What gear did you use in the studio?

DC: Essentially my old drum kit—the *Rotos,* my Simmons and a Ludwig bass and 6 1/2" snare. I used a shallower Ludwig snare—5-1/2X 14—on one cut. For cymbals, I used both my regular Paiste China types, my *Rude* crash, a 19" *2002* crash, and a 20" *Sound Creation* China type with a 14" *404* bottom hi-hat mounted on top of it for special effects. I also used an *Icebell* for special effects. And I used both my hi-hat set-ups.

I changed over to Tama in April of this year—my Ludwig contract expired last October. So now I endorse Tama drums.

ESG: Did you find yourself having to do anything in the studio that was radically different from what you did with Montrose and St. Holmes when you recorded with Heart?

DC: As far as the sound of the drums, no. I record pretty much the same way all the time. I sometimes tuned my *Rotos* to the track, so that they were in the same key as the song. I like to get different colors; different sounds on the drums.

But as far as the songs go, I like to think that I'm adaptable to any sort of situation. I just happened to have played in those bands that are, quote, "heavy metal." That's the kind of music that I like to play, but I also think I can do lighter, more delicate things too.

For instance, there's a song that Nancy wrote—"Danny"—that has almost a samba feel. It was a different feel for me than anything I've played for a while, but I had no problems with it. And there's a song that Ann wrote—"Sleep Alone"—that has more of like a heavy rhythmic groove. Most of the other songs on the album are like this—pretty straight ahead.

As far as the way the drums are set up, I never really change anything. I make myself comfortable. And then it's up to the engineer and the producer to work around me. I make sure that my drums sound good, and that they're tuned properly. I think the player needs to be comfortable. That's really important.

It's a real drag to go into a studio when you're used to playing a double-headed bass drum and somebody wants to take the front head off and put a bunch of pillows in there. I've run into situations in the studio where I'll set up and the engineer will go, "Oh my God! I can't mike your drums! Your cymbals are too close to your toms. You'll have to raise them up," or something like that. Or they want to put wallets on all your drums. I don't know where that whole padding down the drums thing came from—maybe from guys who weren't too experienced in the studio years ago who didn't know how to tune drums, and that was the only way they could get a good sound out of your kit. Anyway, it's something that's bothered me for a long time.

ESG: Who else have you recorded with?
DC: Al Stewart—I did his last album. And I did one album with a group called Saint Paradise. Of course, that's all in addition to my work with Meisner, Sammy, Montrose and Gamma.
ESG: What companies do you endorse other than Paiste and Tama?
DC: Vic Firth sticks—I use their *SD-1* generals. I used to use Regal Tip *2-S* sticks. I would get them unfinished from the factory. When you play real hard and sweat a lot, you can have trouble holding onto a stick with the finish on it. We tried everything—tape, for instance, but that just ruins your hands. So Tommy Aldridge turned me on to getting the sticks from the factory unfinished. The only problem is they warp if they sit around for a long time.

Now my roadie, Gary Clark—believe me, I'd be lost without him!—sands the Vic Firths to get the finish off of them. That cures the problem.
ESG: Do you use any mallets at all for special effects?
DC: Yeah, I use cotton-head mallets on the cymbals for "Mistral Wind."
ESG: What do you do to maintain your equipment on the road?
DC: Gary changes the drum heads about every three shows—they're pretty much shot by then. The tonality has gone out of them, and they start sagging in the center.

As far as the hardware goes, I used to be real hard on it. But there's a lot of good hardware out now, and we use a lot of preventative maintenance. Cymbal filters are changed quite frequently so they don't wear out. So nothing breaks on the gig, *usually.*

Roadies are unsung-hero type guys. But Gary makes it really easy for me—we work hand in hand. He's an amazing guy. He's conscientious, and he always does a good job.

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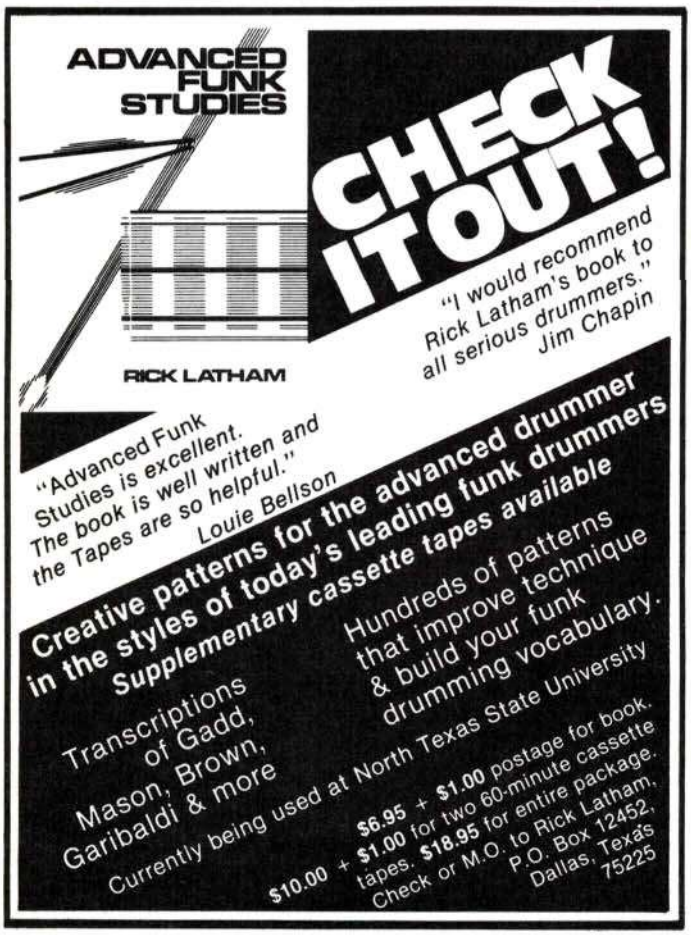

ESG: He's marvelous! How did you find him?

DC: He was with Heart. In fact, he was Derosier's roadie, too. I had a guy from San Francisco who had been with me for a couple of years who was really good. I wanted to take him with me when I was first asked to join Heart. But they wanted to keep Clark and see how we got along together, and it's really been nice. He's *real* good. He's one of the best drum roadies I've ever known.

There are a lot of times when the band can't get to soundcheck. But Clark gets it together. If I don't get a chance to tune my drums when I walk onstage, I have total confidence that everything's going to be right. I think we had—outside of the Simmons drums fouling up there a few times—one bass drum pedal break in a concert. And that was it.

I've really gone out of my way to buy really good stuff. That's why I bought the Sonor hi-hat stand. I saw it at the NAMM show, and I said, "Man, I've got to have it!"

Preventative maintenance is the key, though. You've got to stay on top of everything day in and day out.

ESG: How do you practice? Do you concentrate on beats or work out rudiments or what?

DC: It all depends. Sometimes I'll practice to just a metronome. Sometimes I'll practice to my drum machine. I'll set up a rhythm, go down and just start playing. I'll record most of it, listen back to it and see if there are any good ideas, and try to expand on them. I also go back to my stick control books and play some of my favorite stuff out of them.

ESG: How do you warm up for concerts? When you play with Heart, you really work up a sweat and put out a lot of energy. So do you do any physical conditioning to prepare yourself? You're obviously on a fairly grueling circuit during concert season.

DC: Yeah, we play like two-hour concerts. I get a little break in between when they do their softer tunes, but two hours is a long time to play.

I don't really do any conditioning. I'm pretty active when I'm at home. I play racquetball and golf, and I have a lot of other interests outside music. My wife Lori and I hike a lot. And we've just had a new addition to the Carmassi family—a wonderful little girl named Angela Cora. She was born last November 28, and it's really neat having a little baby. She's really a gas! So all in all, I guess we keep pretty busy.

Mark Andes, our bass player in Heart, runs every day—he's religious about it, and he's in great, great physical shape. I tried running about a year ago and really noticed a difference, but I'm just not that disciplined. It's not real exciting for me.

ESG: Let's talk some more about Mark. How important is the bass player/drummer relationship to setting the groove when you're playing with Heart?

DC: Very essential. I really enjoy playing with Mark. He has a real good feel, and he's real solid. That, to me, is more important than anything. The amount of notes you play is not important—it's the basic feel.

ESG: Do you have any favorite bass players that you've worked with?

DC: Jimmy Haslip—I did a movie soundtrack with him. He plays in the Yellow Jackets with Robben Ford. Tom Erak from Seattle is a really good player—I played with him on the Randy Meisner sessions. Jay Davis with Rod Stewart's group is real hot. And there's this guy named Robin I played with on the Al Stewart album. And, of course, Mark. I really like playing with Mark.

ESG: What's your philosophy regarding the function of a drummer?

DC: I think it changes with the type of music you play. For rock, the drummer has to be the foundation of the band. And yet you can't be strictly a timekeeper. You have to be creative within that framework. For jazz and other types of music, you probably don't

need a timekeeper as much as somebody with feeling.

ESG: So what makes a good drummer a good musician?

DC: Being sensitive to the other musicians in the band. And listening. You can't lay something down and say, "I'm not gonna budge ..."

ESG: You've been with Heart now for over a year. How has your life changed?

DC: It's been a fast year; just non-stop. I really haven't had too much time to enjoy different things that I like to do. Mostly, I guess I've just been real busy. I haven't been home much at all, so I like to bring Lori and the baby with me on the road whenever possible.

But the band's attitude about performing is so confident, so professional and relaxed—something I haven't been used to in the past. They just walk out on stage and do it, which really makes the performance fun. Performing with them is like a breath of fresh air; nobody gets all weirded out, before or after the show. The whole organization is geared towards making everything real easy for the players. The band has had a lot of success, and they've surrounded themselves with good, competent people. It's amazing how everybody gets along so well. It's a good atmosphere to be in.

Whenever new people come into a band, there's always a rush of energy; new blood being pumped in. So far, the excitement is still going on.

ESG: Where does Denny Carmassi see himself ten years from now?

DC: Still playing the drums . . . in some capacity! I'll always play. I don't know if I'll be in Heart ten years from now, but I'll be doing something.

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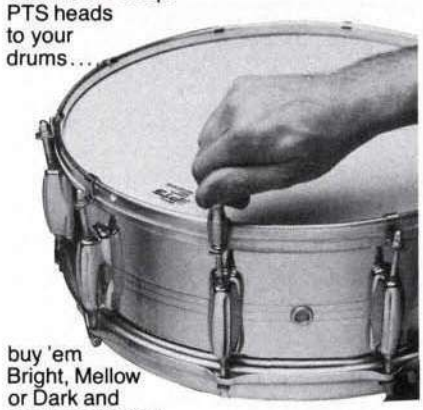

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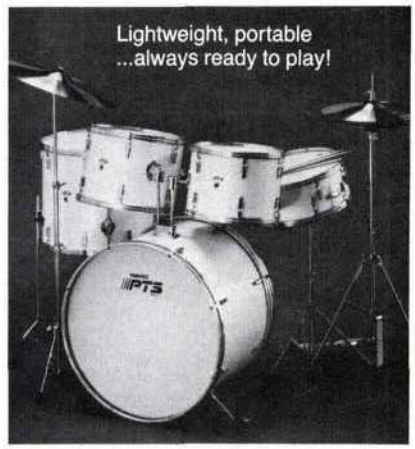

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Alan Dawson
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Creature Comforts

How many hours each week do you *actually spend* behind your drums? If you work like I do, five nights a week, five sets a night, that works out to around 25 hours performing. A couple of rehearsals a week adds another six to eight hours, so my total is around 33 hours per week. Many drummers work six nights a week (I used to), and might do *more* rehearsing, so the likelihood of a 40-hour work week is not at all unusual among steady players.

When you spend this much time in your working environment, I believe you owe it to yourself, and to your playing, to be as comfortable as possible in that environment. You work hard, you've practiced diligently, you've developed skills that you wish to use to the optimum in order to give the best possible performance. There should be no outside factors—no physical or psychological inhibitions—to prevent you from doing your best. You don't get any brownie points for "playing hurt," or having to work harder than necessary, or for being uncomfortable on your job. On the contrary, professional players will do all that they can to insure their personal comfort while performing, so that their concentration can be entirely on the playing, and not on some nagging discomfort.

I'd like to give you some suggestions, based on my own experience and those of other players I've talked to, on how to make your working environment more conducive to a comfortable, quality performance.

1. *The drumset:* This is the most basic element in your physical comfort. How you set up the kit—the relationships between the drum and cymbal adjustments and the distance you have to move to reach everything—is the largest factor in how you feel while playing. You should not have to stretch, nor should you ever have to move in such a way as to be out of balance, in order to strike anything on the set. A drumset, large and mechanical as it may seem, is the most personal of all instruments, because it must literally be constructed around the individual player, and tailor-fitted to that player's size, arm and leg reach, etc. Be sure that you can play around your set with economy of movement, without the need for any special gymnastics in order to play on any part of thekit.

2. *The drum stool:* This is the single most important piece of equipment, relative to playing comfort, on the drumset. Back in the Dec. '81/Jan. '82 issue of MD, I did a feature comparing drum thrones, i mentioned the importance of comfortable padding to prevent backstrain, and also to prevent the "cutting" of the undersides of your thighs by the edge of the seat. If your seat has little or no padding, or the padding has flattened down over the years, then either replace it or re-pad it. You can easily buy a three- to four-inch thick piece of polyfoam at an upholstery or fabric shop (many are sold pre-shaped as the padding for sofa pillows) and trim it to fit on top of the existing seat. Using the fabric of your choice (leather, vinyl, canvas, heavy denim, etc.), cut a piece large enough to cover the new foam and then wrap down and around to the underside of the seat. Staple or tack the new cover onto the wood base that is the seat's bottom, and if you desire, sew all the folds or pleats into seams to make a good, tight fit. Now you have a nice, plush seat.

Once you have the bottom of the seat comfortable, what about your back? In the same drum stool article I explained how important backrests on drum stools are. Some brands of thrones have backrests available as options (Sonor is a notable example; Humes & Berg is another) and several others used to but have since discontinued those models. This is regrettable, because the opportunity to lean back against some solid support, at least between tunes if not during them, is important towards relieving "drummer's crouch" and the seemingly unavoidable backache that results from it. If your stool is constructed in such a way as to accept a backrest, even if the company no longer makes one, then perhaps *you* can. I made the one I use in combination with my Rogers 1976 model *Samson* throne, and I was able to attach it with no difficulty. In many cases, with a little ingenuity on your part, you can come up with a workable backrest at surprisingly low cost. I earnestly recommend you try it, because the return in comfort will far outweigh the initial investment in time and money.

Another way to avoid backstrain is to be absolutely sure that the stool is adjusted to the optimum height for your body size, and for your style of playing. As your playing style changes to meet new musical demands, your set-up should also change to facilitate the different movements you'll be making in the patterns and fills you'll be playing. I used to sit fairly low, with the drums also low and flat—very traditional jazz/big band style. As I got more and more into rock playing, and needed more impact power on the bass drum and toms, I raised the toms, and found it more comfortable to play if I also raised my seat. Now, on occasions where I've played someone else's drums, I've been very uncomfortable at lower levels, and my back, calves and ankles ache at the end of the night from the unfamiliar angles created by the different seat level. Even if you've been playing for several years at your current height, if you feel any pain or tension in your back, legs or feet, try experimenting with your seat height (only a little at a time, higher or lower) to find a more comfortable level. You might be surprised at how a quarter of an inch one way or the other can make a tremendous improvement for you.

One little added feature that I use on my drum seat is a towel. I sit on it. This does a number of things for me. It keeps my bottom more comfortable when I'm playing; it keeps the perspiration that beads up on the vinyl seat cover from soaking the seat of my pants; it prevents that perspiration from leeching out the dye in the vinyl and staining my clothing. I have seen seats that were covered in fabric, rather than vinyl, and of course they didn't have the bead-up problem, as perspiration tended to soak through the fabric cover and be absorbed by the foam padding. But the problem with this is that after a period of time the fabric becomes unsightly due to staining, and the foam tends to hold the perspiration odor, making the stool rather unpleasant, if not uncomfortable. The towel I use is easy to remove and wash, so I always have a fresh seat to work on.

3. *Perspiration:* Let's talk about ways to keep perspiration problems to a minimum. If you perspire heavily (and even if you don't), you should use an antiperspirant before going on stage. You owe this to your band and your customers as a simple courtesy anyway, but it will help to minimize the interference with your playing

that heavy perspiration can cause. You should definitely have a towel available to wipe your face and hands if necessary, and that towel should be within easy reach at all times. Once again, just as a courtesy to others and a hygienic protection for yourself, wash the towel often, or keep several going *in rotation.* Do *not* leave used, soiled towels on stage to ripen. You're working in a nightclub—you don't want it to smell like a locker room.

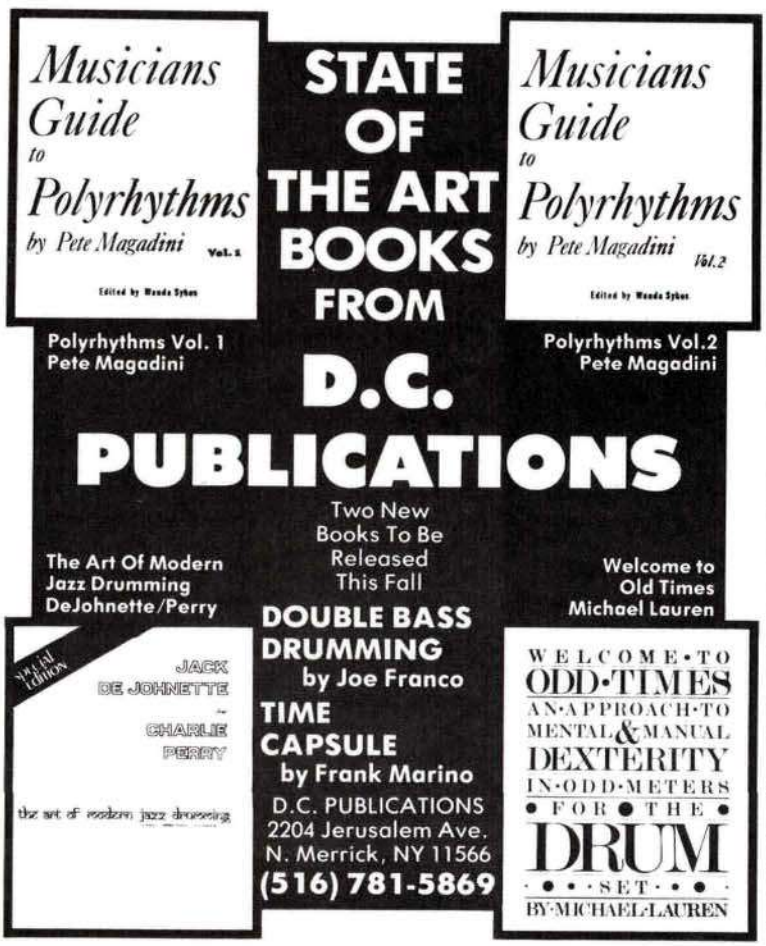
If your wardrobe and appearance requirements permit, the use of wristbands can be helpful to prevent stick slippage. If your palms perspire heavily and stick grip is a serious problem, consider drum gloves, which are available commercially, and advertised in this magazine.

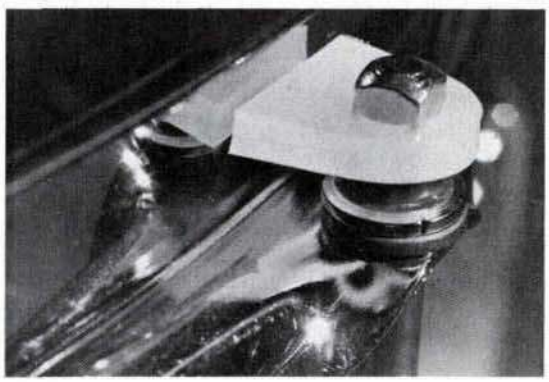
Perspiration can be a problem, but it is one you should deal with reasonably. You should not turn your problem into one for the entire band. I once knew a drummer who insisted on towelling his face, his hands *and his sticks* between every tune. You can imagine what this did to the momentum of the group's performance. This was an unreasonable and overindulgent solution to the problem. You can minimize the amount of perspiration that actually interferes with your playing by the methods I've described.

4. *Air and temperature control:* One way to minimize perspiration problems is to keep as cool as possible while working. I heartily endorse the use of personal fans on stage. Of course, their effectiveness at reducing the temperature around you will vary with the heat of lights, the size of the crowd, the effectiveness of the room's own cooling system, and many other factors. But at least a fan can keep the air moving around you, and prevent the stifling feeling that can occur in a crowded club. The size of the fan you use will depend on your budget, the amount of space you have for it, and how visible you want or don't want it to be. One word of caution: a fan should not be blowing directly on you, no matter how tempting that might be. You risk chilling yourself too quickly after becoming heated while playing, and that quick chilling can create muscle cramps and throat problems.

Lately, some new products have come on the market, some of which are called air ionizers, and others simply smoke-eaters. The smoke-eaters tend to be simple suction pumps which pull in air containing smoke and dust, pass it through a filter and then blow it out again. The ionizers are electronic devices that place an electromagnetic charge in the air, which is supposed to stick to smoke and dust particles, causing them either to drop out of the air, or disperse in such a way as to reduce local air pollution around the device. I can't honestly say how effective these small units might be in the heavily polluted atmosphere of a club, but I do know some performers who swear by them. Perhaps the benefit is purely psychological, or perhaps it is genuinely physical—I'm not an authority. But it might be worth checking out. Possibly if everyone in the band had one nearby, the combined effect might be positive. *Anything* that can reduce the irritation to your respiratory system, especially if you sing, will contribute to your overall comfort while working.

5. *Refreshments:* I certainly see nothing wrong with having a cool drink available for sipping between tunes. Whether or not it's an alcoholic drink is up to you, although I'd like to point out that plain or





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sparkling water will refresh your system more effectively, without any additional effects. Alcohol is first a stimulant, and later a depressant, so it can create differences in your physical condition over the course of the evening. In order to make it easier to grab a quick drink between numbers, you need some handy place to keep a glass within reach. The top of a speaker cabinet, a trap case, or some other table-like surface is not bad, if it isn't so conspicuous as to seem unsightly. (For safety reasons, *never* place a glass on or near an amplifier, P.A. board, keyboard instrument, or any other electronic equipment which could be damaged by a spilled drink.) There are a few commercially available towel-and-glass racks that clamp onto any of your stands to keep a drink and a towel handy. I see nothing wrong with keeping your favorite refreshment on stage with you, but I do think you should not have more than the current glass or bottle. I intensely dislike the look of a stage cluttered with empty glasses or beer bottles. I think it cheapens the appearance of the band, and makes the performance seem unprofessional.

A personal habit I acquired as a defense against dry throat while singing is the use of non-medicated throat lozenges. It's easy to pop one into your mouth before a tune, and just tuck it in a cheek out of the way. The lozenge dissolves slowly, keeping the mouth and throat refreshed and lubricated for quite a while. Some singers I know prefer to use such a lozenge momentarily, then remove it to sing, but I found no difficulty in singing while the lozenge was still in my mouth. I suppose it's just a matter of getting used to it. But if you've ever had a "dry tickle" in your throat while in the middle of a tune, unable to reach for a drink, then you'll appreciate the constant source of moisture provided by a lozenge.

While we're on the subject of dryness, I recommend the use of *Chapstick* or some similar lip balm if the air conditioning in your club tends to dry your lips. This can also happen with the use of a personal fan. *Chapstick* containers are small and easily kept near you on stage, or in a pocket. Used on each break, it can make a great deal of difference to the long-term condition of your lips. Seriously chapped lips are painful, and singing with sore lips is no fun at all. Take care of the problem with this simple solution.

6. *Hands and feel:* Your hands may or may not take a tremendous beating, depending on how hard you play and how much you abuse them. It might be a matter of just a couple of callouses, or you might be blistering your hands consistantly. Remember that your hands are your primary tools in your occupation. If they get too sore to work, you're out of a job. The regular use of a good quality hand lotion will soften callouses and prevent dry skin problems. A particular problem I had was that I'd build up a small callous along the side of my thumb, which would then become dry and would crack, inviting a small but aggravating infection. The use of hand lotion minimized this problem for me.

Blisters are an indication that something is literally "rubbing you the wrong way." There are some mechanical/technical suggestions I would make first, such as: (a) Examine your playing style and grip. If you play traditionally and blister your left hand, perhaps a switch to matched grip would give you more power without blisters, (b) Evaluate the size of sticks you are using to judge whether you are squeezing too hard, and whether you are doing too much of the work and a larger size might be indicated, (c) Consider miking your drums if you have to hit so hard that blisters result.

If, after careful consideration and appropriate action, you still get blisters regularly, then you need additional protection for your hands. Some drummers simply have softer skin than others, and must deal with this problem in order to play comfortably. I've seen drummers tape up their hands in a similar fashion to conga players, but I find this awkward when handling sticks, which conga players aren't concerned with. My suggestion would be to try a drum glove instead.

Aching feet are a regular complaint among loud players, especially those who play their bass drum in the heel-up style. This style of playing calls for a repeated impact of the toes and/or the ball of the foot immediately behind the toes against a hard metal footplate. Even though I mike my bass drum, I still play hard, and by the second or third night of the work week my toes feel cramped and the ball of my foot seems bruised. I've tried playing in soft-soled shoes, but I prefer to play in a shoe with a fairly high heel—more like a dress boot—and these are generally not available with a soft sole. So recently I've been using Dr. Scholl's (famous among drummers for Moleskin) *Air-Pillo Insoles.* These are thick, ventilated foam insoles that serve to cushion the foot, as well as keep it cooler. My playing comfort has improved dramatically, and my feet feel much less fatigued at the end of the night. A pair of these costs around $1.98 at the local drugstore, and just might be one of the best investments you'll ever make.

7. *Clothing:* This seems like it should be obvious, but my experience talking with other drummers has been that it isn't. You should wear clothing that is comfortable, cool, and easy to move in. I'm aware that many bands are uniformed, and the choice of clothing is not yours to make. However, if you do wear a band outfit, make sure it is tailored for your playing requirements, not just for good looks. A trimly fitted

sport coat may look great offstage, but if you can't use your arms freely in it, and have to remove it after the first two tunes, what's the point? Have the coat tailored to allow the movement you need. Think of the outfit as a stage costume: it isn't necessary that it *be* perfectly fitted streetwear, so long as it *appears* to be from where the audience sees it. It has to be functional as well as (and to a greater degree than) fashionable.

If you don't wear a band outfit, then keep in mind which fabrics "breathe," and which tend to cling when soaked with perspiration. If you prefer tightly fitting clothes, because of your body shape or the fashions appropriate to your club, then get clothing made from stretchable fabrics that will give you free movement capability. Don't bind yourself up unnecessarily.

8. *Litter bag:* This is a pet peeve of mine. I hate to see a stage floor littered with matchsticks, cigarette butts, broken stick tips, empty guitar string wrappers, old request notes, and all of the flotsam and jetsam that accumulates over the weeks of a steady gig. I find such a trashy environment depressing to work in, and unprofessional to look at from the audience's point of view. So a few years ago I started placing a simple paper litterbag on the side of my trap case within reach from my set. Now if I unwrap a lozenge, the wrapper gets thrown away. If I pull off a piece of gaffer's tape that has been on a head, it too gets thrown away, along with used napkins and the other junk that would otherwise litter the floor. When the bag is full, I just dump it in the trash and return it to the stage for reuse. It really keeps the stage looking cleaner, and keeps me from being psychologically influenced by a depressing environment.

9. *Earplugs:* Speaking of psychological influences, high noise level is a very important one. MD ran an article by Jim Dearing some time ago pointing out the dangers of loud music relative to ear damage, and of course this is an element of physical comfort you must not overlook. But rather than reiterate what Jim said, I'd like to add that high noise levels can produce increased tension, aggravation and impatience. Nervous tension affects tempo, grooves, and general interaction between players in the group. The use of earplugs, in addition to their health and safety aspect, can be a major contribution to your psychological well-being and comfort, and thus to your quality of performance.

All in all, I believe that you should be very self-indulgent when it comes to providing for your personal comfort while performing. Don't be embarrassed to take whatever steps are necessary to improve your working environment, because it can only help to improve your work. Take care of number one, and you'll find that you'll then have greater personal concentration, and a better attitude toward the rest of the group.

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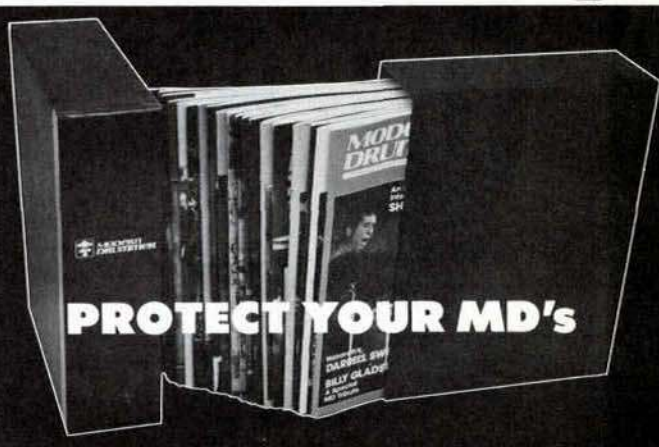

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Aquarian *continued from page 25*

We've done a lot of field testing; we don't do "Ivory Tower" management. We don't sit around here trying to confirm each other's theories, we take 'em out to the clubs. Again, it's a percentage thing, because one way to go broke for sure is trying to please everybody. You have to decide who your customers are, what you think you can do for them, and then you satisfy those people. Then if you get an idea to help you satisfy another group later, then you do that. For instance, the *Super Cymbal Spring* came about because Jack DeJohnette told me he loved the original *Cymbal Spring,* but he couldn't use his Chinese cymbal on it upside down. He uses two 18's upside down as crash cymbals, and once you turn them upside down, all the weight goes forward. So we fooled around with it until we came up with a way to make it. By putting another spring inside and making them shorter, we got the right amount of resistance and the necessary strength. A very small percentage of cymbals are played upside down, but the idea for the product really came from the drummers who use it.

We try to stay in touch with the drummers. I mean, we will educate them as to what we're trying to do, but we really can't educate people as to what *they* should be doing. What we're trying to say is, "Look, here are our reasons—check 'em out. Might be good for you; might not be. But at least analyze our new products with the same amount of information that we would." And based on all the research we do before we ever bring a product out, we know that we're going to have a certain amount of success. I think there's always a certain amount of resistance that you run into with a new product, and there are several things that allow you to survive. One is if the product really is viable and it really does serve a current need. The next thing is how you conduct your business and represent yourself to the business community and your customers.

DD: The industry needs time to get used to things. My 16-year-old son has been playing with the *X-10 Lites* right from the start. He picks up wood sticks and says they're too long and too light. As kids come into the industry and are looking around at sticks and hear that wood sticks are breaking, they'll just pick up ours and *start* with them and never need anything else. Wood sticks will be something they never even try.

RB: One of the biggest problems that we have is that drummers never test a piece of equipment in the same manner that they use it. How do drummers test a drumstick? They tap it on a glass counter. Ever see a drummer test a foot pedal? He puts it up on the counter and takes his fingers and pushes down on the footboard and says, "This feels good." That's the last time his fingers ever touch the footboard of the pedal; then he puts his boots on and starts stomping the heck out of the pedal. Or he wants to try a snare drum out, so if he's lucky, he may get a chance to just tap on it very lightly.

I actually was in a music store where one guy was running some kind of phase distortion unit through an amplifier, another guy was trying out an electric organ, another guy was trying out an electric piano, and another guy was trying out a *Telecaster* through an amp. And there was a big sign on the drums that said: "The Eleventh Commandment: Thou shall not play the drums!" The store owner had the nerve to ask me what I thought he could do to improve his drum business. I said, "Well, this is going to seem basic, but the first thing you've got to do is get rid of that sign. You're asking a person to spend anywhere from ten bucks to thousands of dollars to buy percussion equipment, and you're saying 'Don't hit it and don't touch it. We'll hand it to you with gloves and you'll like it.' " Your average music dealer does not understand drums, and doesn't even like them. They require a huge investment in a lot of space. Just to set up a double-bass drumset with a lot of tom-toms . . . you know how many amplifiers and guitars you could put into the space of that one drumset? On the other hand, the attitude has *had* to change, because the drumset now is a big sale, not only in the cost of the drums, but the fact that players are using much bigger sets.

You want to know one of the things we had to overcome with music dealers? A guy told us, "Your sticks are great, but I won't sell them. I *like* for the sticks to break; I make a lot of money off of wooden sticks. I don't want them to last very long."

DD: Sure is for the drummer, ain't he?

RB: I said, "Wait a minute—don't you want to sell the best possible product?" and he said, "Well, if I sell the guy your sticks he won't walk into my store as often." I said, "Well, I'm going to sell them to everyone else around you, and you're going to be the only guy who's not up to date."

You cannot stop technology; there's just no way to do that. I read this great line somewhere: "There's nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come." And that explains why all of a sudden, after all these years, there are three or four companies out there with synthetic sticks. The time has come. A fad-type product isn't going to survive, but if a new product satisfies a need, it will. It goes back to the music. Drummers are playing very hard, trying to get *up* to the level of the rest of the group, so they are breaking sticks and drumheads and cymbals. Well, the *Cymbal Spring* answers a part of that need. And now our next thing is to answer that same need in another way with our miking system, so a

drummer can sit down and play normally, in a relaxed way and get enough sound.

RVH: How far has the development come on the miking system?

RB: The development is finished. We took a prototype unit several months ago to McCune Sound, which is one of the largest in the United States, and they tested it outside in a parking lot with all their equipment.

DD: Outside! They didn't want to hear any "room" sound, just what was really happening.

RB: We didn't tell them anything—we just said, "We have this unit and we'd like to know what you think." After listening they said, "That's the best drum sound we've ever heard. When can we get a unit? We want to start using it on concerts." And this part of the test was done without EQing anything. Once they messed around with it, they said, "We can't believe it's so easy." It's because they're not getting the normal distortion that tends to happen with drum mic's. The secret is that power extender that we have.

We've done an unusual thing in the sense that we're not saying, "Here's a microphone," we're saying, "Here's a *system."* And Dave's designed a clamp that's incredible—it'll fit on anything that's not nailed down. It'll fit on a bongo drum, on a conga, timbales, a tom-tom . . . anyplace.

RVH: MD recently ran a feature with several engineers discussing their choices for mic's on drums, and several seemed to agree that condenser mic's were good in some applications but not in others. Why then use only condenser mic's in your system?

DD: First of all, a condenser mic' has a really small, thin diaphragm. It responds right now to any little thing it hears. A dynamic has a big diaphragm and a big coil, and when you put sound into it, it has to move a big giant mass. So you don't get what you call "attacks" off of things. Condensers pick up the stick hitting the head even before you hear the drum, so you hear the attack, and that's what drums are—nothing but attack sound; percussive sound. Condensers pick up the percussive sound better than any mic' in the world, but the reason people didn't use them is because they are very fragile, and very expensive. Not that they didn't like the sound, because the frequency response is the flattest of any mic' made; it's so accurate it just gets *everything.*

RB: A microphone is like a lot of other pieces of equipment—it's only as good as the system it's used with. By developing this power range extender, we've managed to . . .

DD: Get rid of all the bad points why they never used condensers. That's why, when I take these out to clubs, the sound engineers who've been using their special mic's around the kit for ten or fifteen years . . . the only reason why they really tried our mic's is because of the convenience. They don't think they're going to work as good as the mic's they used, but they really dig the clamping idea—not having to carry around all the stands and stuff—so they will agree to give them a try. But when they hear them, they say "I like 'em. When a drummer goes around the toms you just hear that click of the stick hitting the drums and then you hear the drums. We can use the same mic' on the kick drums, and nobody's ever done that before."

RVH: Overheads for cymbals?

DD: You don't need overheads. We have a special clamp that clamps right on the cymbal stand and mikes it from underneath. From our experimenting, a mic' doesn't know whether it's on the top or bottom of a cymbal.

RVH: What does your system basically consist of?

DD: Microphones, special clamps, the plugging system and power supply.

RVH: What is it that you're boosting to improve the sound?

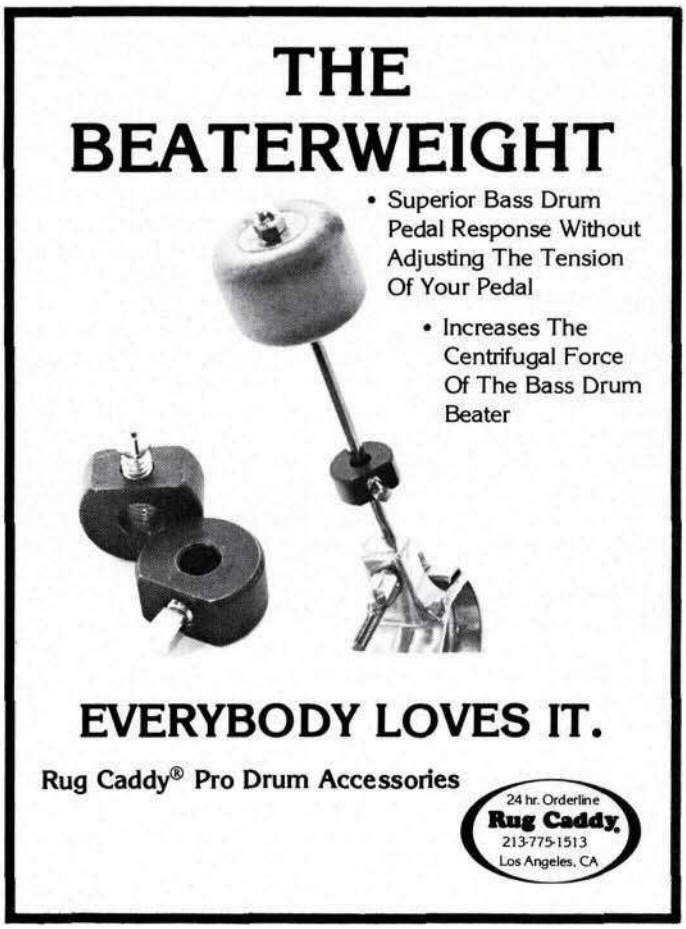
DD: It's a dynamic range extender; it actually extends the sound-pressure level that the mic' can handle. It *increases* it rather than just padding it down.

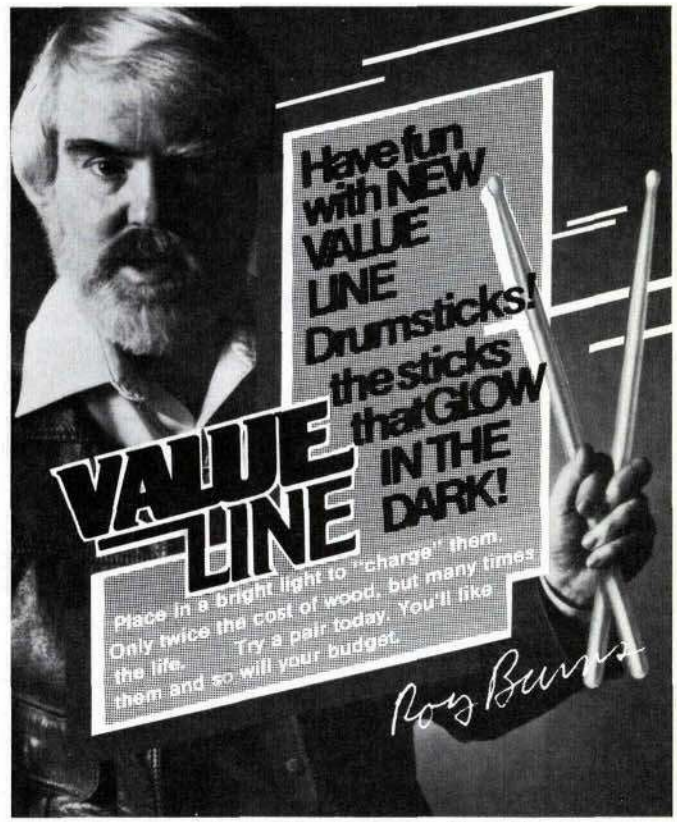
RVH: And from there it goes into . . . ?

DD: Any mixer. It's six-in, six-out, or we also make a three.

RB: You can add on to it to suit your needs.

DD: You can piggyback in increments of





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three. We figured that three would be good for a conga player; he'd have two, with one mic' left over for a cowbell or something like that.

RVH: If I were totally miking my kit, I'd need about 16 mic's. How about cost?

RB: We have a special holder that allows you to mike two mounted tom-toms at once. But what you have to remember is that one-sixth of the power range extender, plus the cord, the clamp *and* the mic'—that one full channel of sound from your drum to the mixer—will cost less than the price of an all-purpose microphone alone.

DD: Less than an *SM-58* for instance.

RB: Not counting the cord and the stand that must be used with such a mic'.

RVH: Six in, six-out means an individual P.A. channel required for each microphone. This then is not a sub-mixing system for the drummer to mix himself and send to one channel of the P. A.?

DD: No. Why make mixers and sub-mixers when there are so many of them out there that people already have; why try to compete with that? Just give them good mic's and let them run any way they want.

RB: We're trying to keep it simple. If you come up with microphones like ours, that can *only* be used with our power range extender, and then tell them it can only be used with *this* mixer, and *this* wah-wah, etc., it gets to the point where it becomes unmarketable. Most groups already have a lot of equipment; they don't need to buy a whole new system and start all over again. What they need is to buy something they can plug into their existing equipment. We even discussed the idea of various kinds of travel cases, but we realized that almost all groups that travel have great big cases, so we need soft-type cases so that they can just keep everything together and then put it in an existing case. Again, we're doing our analyzing bit. Do we want to build a case and make drummers buy it when they could buy the same thing cheaper from Anvil or some other case company? Do we want to add on and make this thing more complicated, or are people really looking for something that gives them a really good sound with a minimum of hassle?

RVH: The entire musical industry seems to be economically depressed. How does that relate to the relatively small-cost items such as yours?

RB: Well, what's happening in the business now is that people with products that are not that valid, or people who haven't priced their products correctly, or people who are just not capable of running a business, even though they might have a good idea or two, they're kind of being "weeded out" right now. What's going to happen is that the people who survive our current economy will be in a very strong position when it picks up. I also think that it will never again be as easy to go into business in this country as it was up until, say, four or five years ago. To get into business now is going to require so much more money than it would have five years ago, that it automatically leaves the average guy out. The costs of a building, the cost of financing . . . we'll never go back to the days when it was easy to get into business and get started. We're sort of caught up in a whole world economic pattern now, and there's just no easy way to divorce yourself from it.

DD: The Japanese are really hurting us; they're the major cause.

RVH: In what specific ways?

RB: Let's take tax advantages. If you bought a big piece of machinery, like our tooling, it used to take you eight years to amortize it, and now I think it's like three, in the U.S. The Japanese can amortize all their tooling and get a full tax write-off in one year. They're playing with a different set of rules than the American businessman. Also, they can operate at no profit for a year or two, until they've established a foothold in the market. We don't get that luxury; we have to start paying the rent the week we go in. They give a business a year or so to get off the ground. We can't sit here and just lose money saying "Well, we're just establishing our place in the market." We have to earn our way.

I think that people can complain about what the Japanese do—different tax breaks, different rules, that kind of thing—but my own personal opinion is that it was American management that ruined the American drum companies. All very short-term thinking. There's a famous foot pedal that's been on the market for many years, and when they asked the man who owned the company, why didn't they ever improve it, as it did have certain flaws, his answer was, "Why should we improve it? Do you know how many of those we sell?" If the automobile industry had that attitude we'd all still be driving *Model-T* Fords. There was kind of an anti-research thing going on in companies; like a hanging on to the past. They didn't really want to improve their products because it took money, it took brains, it took ideas. The American companies had the jump on everybody else, but instead of continuing to develop their own ideas, they didn't, for a variety of reasons, and they lost the leadership position in our industry. And let's face it, the drumset was *invented* in this country. The whole idea of playing the drumset started in this country; the whole idea of the kind of equipment we have—it all started in this country. Why did we allow ourselves to lose out? I think it's because we had too many accountant-types running companies. You notice, whenever it's a private individual who owns the company, they're always up with the times. Remo is always in there; Zildjian's come out with a lot of new stuff; Paiste's got a whole line of new stuff; LP's got all kinds of new stuff; Pro-Mark is now making hickory sticks; Calato's got some new

sticks out. You'll notice right now that it isn't your small, privately-owned companies that are in the most trouble—it's the conglomerates. The problem with big corporations is too many guys spend too much energy *keeping* their job, rather than *doing* their job.

RVH: You and Dave have been working together for several years—going back to your days at Rogers. What's the basis of your working relationship?

RB: We're two very tenacious guys. Occasionally we have our friendly arguments; we both have strong opinions and are not easily sold on an idea. By the same token, if we start on an idea, it might take us years, but we generally get it. We're difficult that way. Dave and I sort of use the idea—and we've talked this over with Ron, our other partner—that Dave isn't that smart, I'm not that smart, and Ron's not that smart, but collectively we're one smart person. Everything we do here we all three have a voice in. Even if you're outvoted by the other two guys, the reasons are always very clear. What it winds up with is very rarely do we ever have a vote with the three of us where one guy winds up being opposed to the decision. In other words, we go through all the alternatives of what's possible: is this going to cost us too much to do; can we manufacture it; is this a practical method; should we make this change or that change; should we advertise in this way or that way? We all have a voice in that. We each have our primary responsibilities, but we all have a voice in all of it. By the time we reach the bottom line of the discussion, generally we all three agree that there's really no other way to go. So we don't have the typical kind of infighting that you have in a lot of companies. We get excited, but it's not a power play; we can't be promoted or fired. We either make it, or we sink. So all the traditional ego games that go on in offices and companies don't exist here because nobody has a special position. Dave and I share our offices, and we either do equally well or equally bad. There's no need for any games. So therefore, we're able to concentrate on doing the best possible job, and give a drummer the best possible product at a reasonable price. David and I decided that even if we develop our own building, ultimately, which we will, we're always going to be in close communication. If we do a photo session, I want Dave there. When he goes to check out a product, even though I know maybe nothing of the technical end of it, I'm there. If we have separate offices sometime, I want them next to each other. I want a window where I can say, "Come in here for a minute." I don't want to lose that communication, because I think that's really where the death is.

The Japanese companies do much more market research. They talk to a great many more people, and they're not arrogant, They walk around, and they talk to all the music dealers: "What do you need? What price range will sell? What's the most popular? How do *you* think we should do it?" They get all these opinions together, and then they figure out a plan and they go after it. That's essentially what we're trying to do. Every decision is made with all the principals involved, and we ask a whole lot of people their opinion, before we decide to go for it.

RVH: You've developed from small accessory items like the *Kwik-Key* and leather stick and cymbal bags, to the *Cymbal Springs,* which were a fairly simple if more practical aid for drummers, through highly sophisticated processes for the creation of synthetic drumsticks, and most recently a high-tech electronic miking system. Do you plan to expand in terms of the items you have out now, or through further diversification and new products?

RB: Yes to all of the above. Our biggest problem right now is increasing our manufacturing capability without losing the handle on the quality. We can't just order more material, what we have to do is train new people, have more space, and more equipment.

It's such a thrill for the two of us to be able to do the things that we want to do. I still feel that you can run a business and be very ethical. And you don't have to hate people who are in the same business. I think you can do all of it.

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Reading Off A Lead Trumpet Part

We often hear big band drummers talk about reading from a first trumpet part, or, "reading over the lead trumpet player's shoulder," when you're without a part of your own. Less experienced players may wonder what information a trumpet part can provide.

Because a trumpet has strong dynamic capabilities that project through the other instruments, it's often utilized to punctuate important rhythmic passages. The drummer is usually called upon to reinforce these same figures. The trumpet part, therefore, provides the rhythmic notation the drummer interprets on the set. Of course, reading from any of the parts in the band is possible, however, the trumpet part gives *enough* additional information to make it the most practical part from which to read.

Below you'll find a section of the lead trumpet part from a big band arrangement that requires both Latin and swing time feels. If we check the information at the top of the chart, we see the approximate tempo, time signature and the Latin time feel. Knowledge of this is essential to establish strong, accurate time when starting the tune.

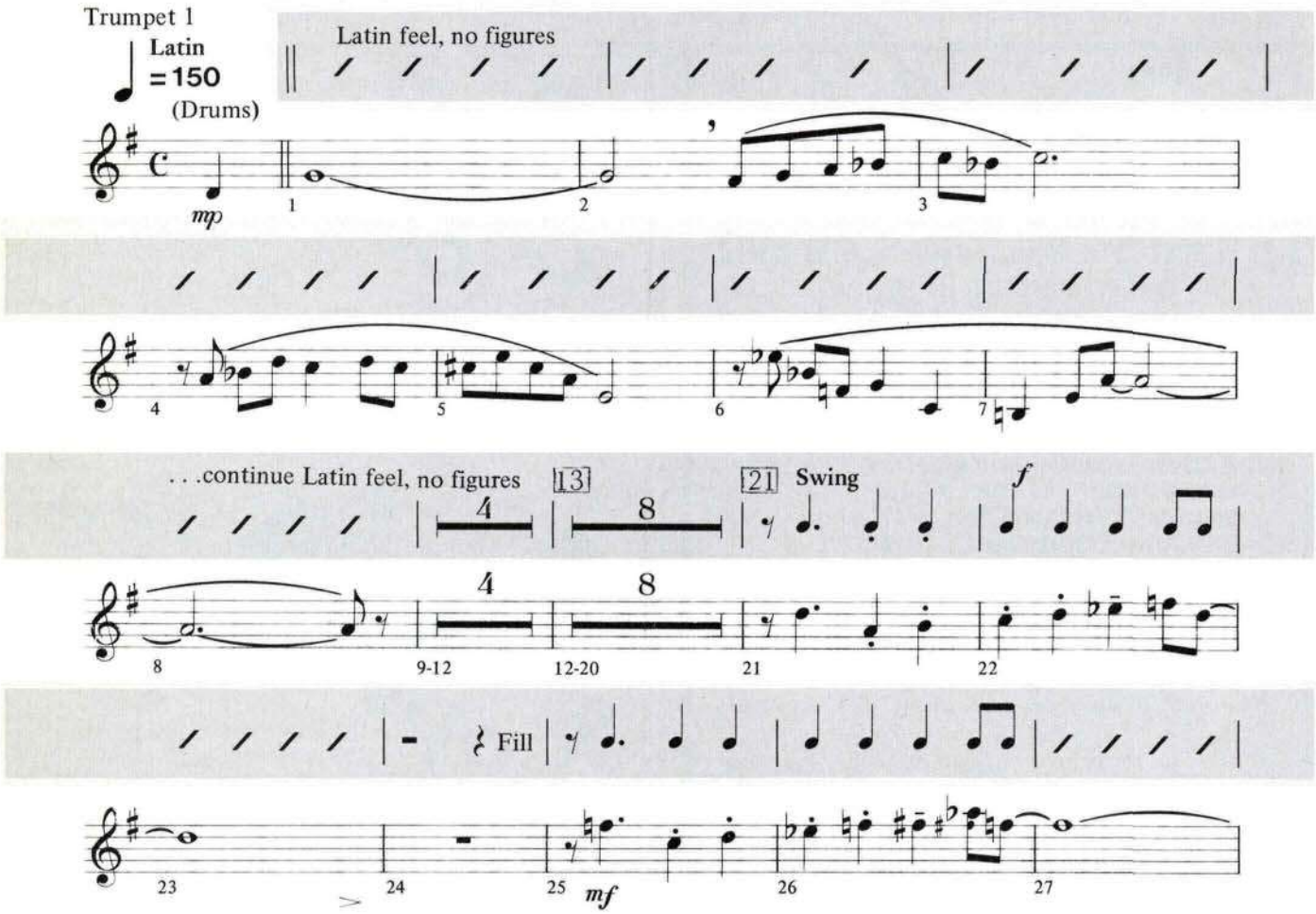
It's also important to gain an understanding of the form of the tune so you can anticipate changes in the feel of the music, as well as where fills may be added. This chart has a 12-measure intro, followed by alternating eight-measure sections of Latin and swing(measures 13-44).

An important decision that must be made when reading from a lead trumpet part is *what notes to play and what notes to leave out.* Obviously, the arranger does not want you to reinforce each and every note played by the lead trumpet. Therefore, it's essential that you use your "sixth sense" to determine which rhythmic figures require reinforcement and which do not. Some degree of guesswork is involved, particularly if you're sightreading the part. But with a little practice, the appropriate figures will begin to pop off the page. Concentration and careful listening are essential.

The drum line written above the staff on the chart below is a sampling of how the lead trumpet part can be adapted, simply and usually on sight. Note that the key rhythmic figures in this arrangement occur at measures 21-28, and again at 37-43. Dotted quarter notes, when placed on the "an" of "1," or "an" of "3," often require reinforcement.

Remember: 1) Time is most important. *When in doubt, play time. 2)* Notes written within a slur should be avoided. These notes are played in a smooth, connected manner by the trumpet(Ex. measures 2-8). Don't confuse a *slur,* which is a curved line under or over two or more notes, with a *tie,* which is a curved line connecting two notes of like pitch. 3) Observe all dynamic markings and repeat signs.

With a little practice, you'll soon find yourself adept at this type of thing, and you'll be prepared should you find yourself in a big band situation without a part.



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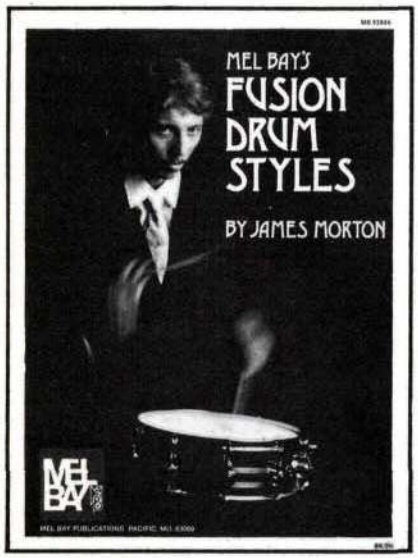

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Below continued from page 29

the bands and *toured* with them?

FB: At that time I only played with Little Walter. But I recorded with Elmore James, Ruth Brown, Etta James, Muddy Waters, Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry, Junior Wells and Buddy Guy. I recorded an album with Dinah Washington. I recorded with The Moonglows and The Platters. The Drifters. I made commercials for 7-Up. I knew jazz and I was playing blues, so, I was able to play just about anything that I wanted to play. I played with Red Holloway.

SF: What kind of a bandleader was Little Walter?

FB: Little Walter was about one of the best harp players I ever knew. I'm telling you. He made it possible for the harp players to really get recognized in my time. He was a very good bandleader. We toured all over the United States. North, South, East and West.

SF: How were the songs written? Would Little Walter tell everyone what to play?

FB: No, it was more of a cooperative thing. I had to play something, then Little Walter had to play something, then the guitar players would have to play something. We'd have to have a meeting of the minds. We'd kick it around and play and if it didn't fit we wouldn't use it. We'd throw this out and put something else in. The guitar player would say, "Well, how about this run? Riff this off." Then we'd try it with the harp. If the harp couldn't fit in there right and the drums wouldn't be able to phrase it right, then we'd say, "No, no. We don't do it that way. Let's try it another way." A very cooperative thing.

The first big gig we had we went up to New York City and played at the Apollo Theater. We only had the four pieces. Everybody wondered how it would be accepted. Man, we went there and we tore that theater up!

SF: Who else was on the bill?

FB: Nappy Brown, The Moonglows, The Drifters, Slappy White and Buddy Johnson's Big Band.

SF: So Little Walter's band was the only band—other than Muddy Waters—that was starting to bring in electric instruments?

FB: No, not really. Muddy Waters was out way before us. We got on the *road first* with the electric band. Muddy didn't start when we started. We started traveling first through the Billy Shaw Booking Agency all across the country, and right behind us came Muddy Waters. Then Eddie Boyd. And I made some records with Eddie Boyd.

SF: Little Walter's band is credited with being the forerunner of the standard format of rock 'n' roll bands.

FB: Well, there was another little thing too. Actually, the *very first* rock 'n' roll show—what you'd call rock—we was rhythm & blues. This was before rock 'n' roll was even thought about! We played for Alan Freed in Cleveland, Ohio, in the first show he come out with. The first rock 'n' roll show. We traveled the whole East Coast with that show. We were in on that with The Drifters, The Moonglows and all that kind of stuff. But, they don't publicize that. They publicize the ones when all the white groups got in. But, Alan Freed didn't start out with them guys first. He started with stuff like Little Walter was doing.

SF: How did you get in touch with Alan Freed?

FB: We didn't get in touch with him, he got in touch with us! There was so much music going on then. They talk about a big rock 'n' roll show. Uh uh! It wasn't even coming out then. Our music was there first but it just didn't sell like the other stuff, I guess. Then the other white bands started coming in and then that turned them on, I guess. They went to New York and it really got on. Freed was a big disc jockey down in Cleveland. The first big show wasn't as big as the later shows. But, the first show that I know about when they talk about rock 'n' roll coming out was with Little Walter, The Moonglows, Buddy Johnson and all them kind of groups.

SF: How long was Little Walter's band onstage during those shows?

FB: Each group wouldn't play no more than a half an hour or 40 minutes because they had so many people on the show. You play your three or four numbers and that's it.

SF: Did you have to back up the other groups?

FB: I backed up The Moonglows because I made the record with them. Remember this big hit they had, "Sincerely"?

SF: When I listen to the Chess records, it seems like you were able to experiment more with your drumming when Willie Dixon started playing bass.

FB: In some instances. A lot of the beats that we used on a lot of these recordings was something that I had to improvise and make up. These were not just straight 1-2-3-4. You remember a tune called "The Watusi"? That's another something that I had to make up. Incidentally, when we did the tune the group that recorded it had to make up a new dance to go with the tune! They were getting ready to start doing some roadwork, playing at these different theaters and the people wanted to know the dance. The beat had to be made up. Then the Watusi dance came out.

SF: It sounds like before Willie Dixon, you were having to work harder to hold the band together. Then when Willie came in, it sounds like he took a lot of that responsibility himself.

FB: Maybe so. He wrote a lot of the tunes. Probably it was his own tunes that he played a lot of bass on. But, I don't think

that he was holding it together so much. He's just a hell of a bass player. That was all. He helped tremendously! He did a lot of arranging. He's a hell of a good arranger. He could sit there and hear something and go, "No, no, no. Wait. You do this and do that. Let's try it that way." We'd switch it around. He and I worked together on a lot of things, like a little tune I made with him called "Walkin' The Blues." Here I go to the studio with a set of drums and I wind up didn't use drums at all. I put a flat wood board on the floor and I had to go out and get some taps put on my shoes. And I walked! They put the microphone close to the floor and we went over it a couple of times to get the effect. We was doing the effect on the drums and the drums didn't sound like nobody walking. Willie Dixon was doing the voice saying, "Oh man, I'm getting so tired. But I'm just walking on down." I was playing the drums but I said, "No, man. That don't sound like nobody walking. It sounds like some drumming! Wait just a minute." I went down to the shoe shop and got some taps put on my shoes. This was an idea I had myself. I'd done a little tap dancing sometime back, but I never did get to it too good. But, we did it. I walked: clump, clump, clump. Right in time with the music. When we got through with it everybody just fell out and laughed. I didn't even need no drums at all. That was *literally* walking the blues! Just me and my shoes, walking the blues.

SF: Is there a difference in approach to playing drums in a blues band, a jazz band or a swing band?

FB: No, not really. I think a drummer—if you call yourself a drummer—you should have a knowledge of all types of music. Don't just stick yourself into one type and not play nothing else. That limits you. Then when you *want* to do something, you can't because you don't know how. By traveling and going different places I learned more.

I spent time over in Africa in 1967. I went with Junior Wells and a blues band. I picked up on a lot of the African beats. I went to some of the African schools and played with the talking drummers.

SF: Would you like to go back to Africa?

FB: Oh man, I would. We toured all of West Africa. We were on tour for about three months with the State Department. We toured all of the new African nations that were going into the U.N. That was right after the MauMau scourge. The United States sent an envoy over there that we were part of. The Junior Wells Blues Band. It was the most exhilarating experience I ever had in my whole life. I was in drumming country and I had my eyes, ears and lingers all ready to learn any kind of thing that I could pick up.

SF: After you'd been playing 10 or 15 years, was the music business what you ex-

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pected it was going to be?

FB: Well, no. The music business has been changing all the time. Learn to change with it and when you are doing good, save some money. Everything is not going to be the same always. You try to be smart about it. Then there are a lot of other things you're going to run into. You're either going to be a whiskey head, a dope head or whatever. You run into different people with that kind of stuff going on and you can see the results of a lot of this stuff. I don't smoke. That would've been my downfall. I never did smoke anything. I don't drink. I used to drink but stopped that. I haven't drunk anything in over 10 years.

SF: I never knew Little Walter, of course, but from the history that's written there seems to have been a lot of drinking going on.

FB: Most musicians did a lot of drinking. They did it for different reasons. But, I don't mean to get to the point where the drinking becomes all consuming and you can't live without it. There's no such thing as you've got to have *this* to do your job. You don't have to have anything! If you know your job well enough, you don't need no crutch.

SF: How did you feel about being in bands with musicians who drank too much?

FB: It didn't bother me. That's the point. It don't bother me what *you* do as long as I know what I'm not supposed to do.

SF: It never had an effect on the total sound of the band?

FB: Yeah. I was able to mix with all different types and it didn't bother me. I'm just going to do what I'm going to do and that's it. I treat everybody alright. I don't try to be overbearing. I don't try to push you down because of what you want to do. That's your business. I can see you today and say, "Hi, man! How are you?" I'm not going to dwell on what you do. I'm a drummer and I know my job. Just like you're a mechanic and you know how to fix that car. You can have all different types of cars and as long as you know how to work on cars, you can work on cars. Well, I'm a drummer. I know how to play my drums and so that's what I do. A lot of guys I'd see, it would hurt me to see them go down the drain. If there's any way I could help them *not* to do it I would. Other than that, there's nothing else I can do.

Here's another thing that was taught to me when I was in the Army Band in Germany. We had great teachers over there. One of the teachers had been playing concert for I don't know how many years. But, he told me that one of the frustrating things about music is to play music 24 hours a day and not know anything else. In order to relieve the pressure, you must take up another thing. Learn another trade. Learn some way other than music to relax yourself, because if you don't relax yourself, you'll be too tight.

SF: What trade did you learn?

FB: Art. Drawing pictures. Camera work. Photography. That's what I do. I've been doing photography since about 1949. I shoot anything. I've got volumes! I just like to go out and shoot pictures. I used to take pictures at parties and sell little pictures here and there. We'd get on a gig and during the intermission I'd take pictures and sell them. Then I'd go overseas and at different places I'd take either moving pictures or still pictures. I also paint by numbers. It's important to do something else; to not think about music 24 hours a day because it ties you up. The tension is too high, and you don't have no way to release the pressure. A lot of the guys have a lot of pressure and don't have no way to release it. You've got to have a release valve.

SF: What was the toughest part of surviving when you were doing a lot of roadwork? How did you stay sane?

FB: Well, I read books. Took pictures. That's about it. I'd go to the movies. I never did just sit and twiddle my thumbs. I'd practice to keep my wrists up.

SF: Were you married when you were on the road?

FB: No. I married in '64. Then I got divorced. Then I remarried. My present wife and I are just in love and we just have lots of fun. I don't travel as much now as I did back in the early days. In the early days I used to be gone all the time. I traveled all over the United States and overseas.

SF: Do you work on the spiritual part of your life? Is that important to you?

FB: Well, yeah. I believe in God. I say my prayers every night. I bless my food every meal. I don't belong to no church that I go to regularly because with the kind of work that I do, I keep moving all the time.

SF: You have a new jazz band now.

FB: I've got a jazz group that I work off and on with. Then I work singles by myself with whoever calls me. The band I work with is drums, piano or organ, bass and saxophone.

SF: Do you have any drum students?

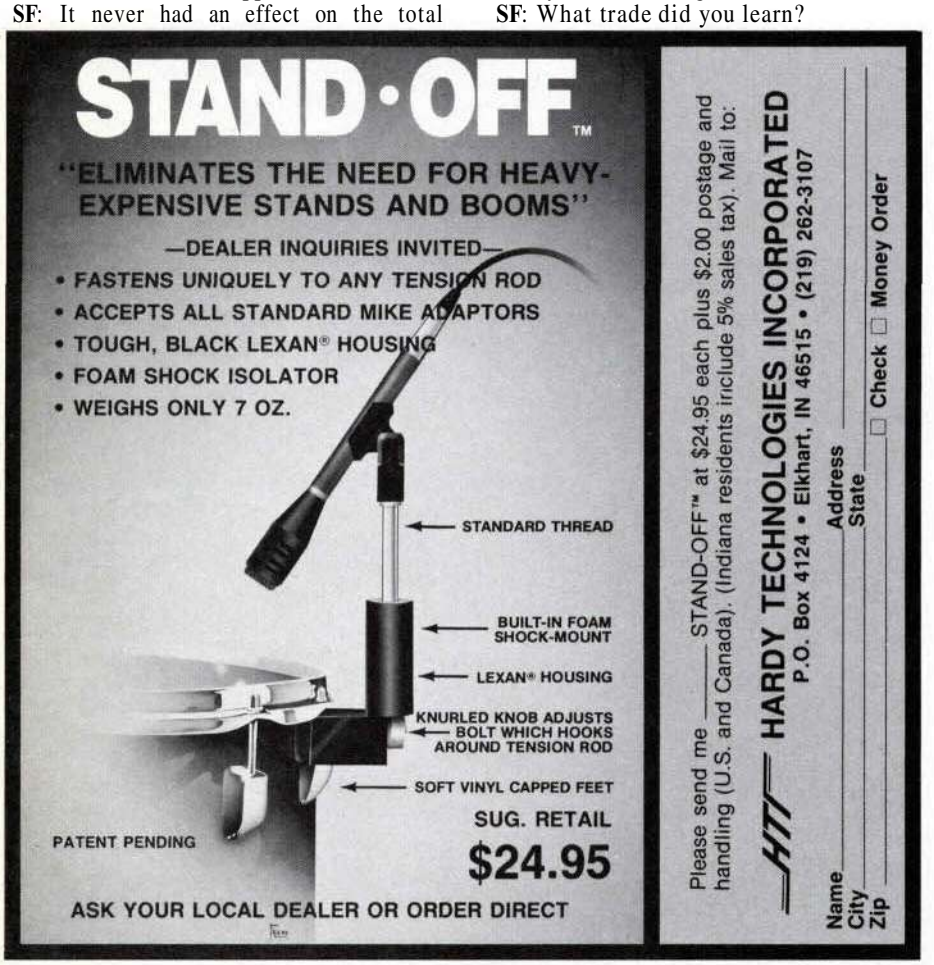
FB: No. I used to teach a little bit. I showed a lot of the blues drummers a lot of little tricks. But I never had time to teach for the simple reason that I stayed gone and working all the time. I wouldn't mind teaching but I don't have the time.

SF: How about clinics?

FB: There's no reason for me to do clinics because I don't have the time. I'm doing other things. Today I might be going over here to take some pictures or going to play ball. I keep myself busy. I never could just sit around and do nothing. You've got to keep your mind active.

SF: It's a shame you don't do clinics to pass on the tremendous amount of knowledge that you have.

FB: I've sat down a lot of times during concert tours. I'd get in a corner and a lot of the kids would come around and I'd talk with them. I've talked with kids overseas



and down South. I went on the road with Charlie Musselwhite one time. We were down in Tennessee playing a big TV and radio show. There was about 35 or 40 kids there and we got into a conversation. They were asking me questions like, "What do you think about holding the sticks this way?" I was giving them my opinion about different things.

SF: Do you have a preference between matched grip and traditional grip?

FB: I use traditional myself because it works good. But, I've seen guys use the drumsticks like mallets. To me, that gives off a different sound and a different beat. It's *harder*. It's not soft enough. I like my way best—the traditional—because of the technique and the pressure. You're not so much "slamming-bang, slamming-bang." The drum is a beautiful instrument if you play it correctly; you can get beautiful sounds. And your drums should be tuned so that you can hear different tones coming out of all the different sizes. You can be playing in a band and all of a sudden you hear that *their* tones are going up. You can't reach it up if your drums are flat. You just have a "plop" sound that don't have *no* tone. But if you've got tone—if the band goes up you can go right up with it!

SF: How do you like to tune your drums?

FB: I tune my drums left to right, so that the two tom-toms have different tones. My floor tom has the lowest tone. My hardest, flat tone would be my bass drum. My snare drum has an intermediate tone. It's between the two tom-toms on the top, so that when you flick the snares off you've got three tones. The two tom-tom tones and the snare drum in the middle of both of them.

I never put anything inside the drums. I never understood why drummers want to stack all that stuff in there. It's okay for recording purposes—putting padding in the drums—but not for when you're playing! That just kills all the tone. You don't know what *you're* playing. I don't put no foreign matter whatsoever in there. The only thing I have on my bass drum is a Dr. Scholl's pad right there where the beater hits so it don't kick a hole in the drum. When it wears out you put another one on there.

SF: Are you using a wood beater on your bass drum?

FB: Hard felt.

SF: Obviously you were using calfskin heads when you first started playing and recording. Did you mind switching to plastic heads?

FB: No. I think I liked it better. It's a different tone. The calfskin gave a little sharper tone. The plastic heads are better for different weather conditions. That's the main thing. When it got damp and muggy and bad weather, them calfskin heads would go up and down—they'd be flabby and all other kind of stuff. With the

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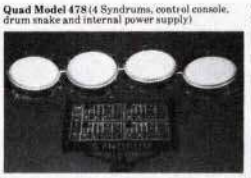

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plastic heads you don't have that problem. Then it was the way you had them tuned. The part that you beat on is the only part of the drum that you tune. The part that you do not beat on, you do not tune it. Like on the bass drum you loosen the part that you're playing on and that's all. Tighten the bottom head of all the drums. Just tune from the top. You never tune from the bottom. The bottom stays like it is. Once you tighten it up then it stays. The top head is what you tune. You can loosen it or tighten it.

SF: Do you ever think that people listen to blues drummers and think that they're not good drummers?

FB: Yes I do. I played a show at McCormick Place one time. It was a big show and I was rehearsing for it. I was known as a blues drummer. I came in for rehearsal one time and the guy gave me a sheet of music and the music was wrong. I sat there with my pen and said, "What a minute, man. This is not right." He said, "What do you mean it's not right?" I said, "Well, here. You don't have enough bars here. You've got five bars." He looked at me and said, "Do you read music?" I said, "Damn right I read music!" He said, "Well, I didn't think you could read. You play all them blues." I said, "Well, that's just as much as you know. I don't have to have a sign that says 'I Am A Drummer Who Plays Everything!' I know how to read and write music."

SF: Weren't all those blues drummers in your era—like Odie Payne—all-around drummers?

FB: Oh my God! Odie Payne is my buddy. We went to the Roy Knapp School together. Marshall Thompson. All of us! Wilbur Campbell. Wilbur Campbell plays as much xylophone as anybody out there —Lionel Hampton and all the rest of them. Wilbur Campbell can *play!* You get some vibes and Wilbur Campbell will eat you up!

SF: In the '60s, when the English bands like The Rolling Stones came over, did you meet any of those guys?

FB: Yeah, I met them before they came here. I met the Beatle guys, The Rolling Stones and all of them.

SF: Did they come around to watch you play?

FB: They weren't no Beatles then. They weren't no well-known bands. They were just guys coming around. They heard what we was playing and they couldn't play what we was playing, but, they *tried* it. And they played it in their English-style way. Next thing that happened a couple of years later, them guys come here and made a million dollars doing some of our same stuff. They just changed the music around.

SF: How did you feel about that?

FB: It didn't bother me at that time. I was just wondering why they could come *here* and make a killing, and we could go *there* and make bacon and eggs. It's just the way our type of music and our people were accepted at that particular time, doing our stuff. We were playing the stuff but we weren't getting the credit and getting that recognition like The Beatles and so forth. We didn't get on no great big show like the *Ed Sullivan Show.* Ed Sullivan didn't *look* at us. But, when The Beatles came here playing the same thing, they said, "Ah, here's a band coming from England playing something." They give them all kinds of recognition. The money makers jumped right on top of the Beatles and now the Beatles are billionaires. And we're still out here trying to make bacon and beans.

SF: Why do you think that is?

FB: It's just the music and the way people accept our music. That's all. You've got some of the greatest musicians—who are black—that be trying to do a good job. Once we make the initiation, then the other people get the credit.

SF: In the beginning, you were playing almost strictly for black audiences?

FB: Yeah. When we went on the first tour of the South we were playing mainly for blacks. But, they had some bigshot white promoters down there and we were drawing such a big crowd in some of the black places that we were playing at, that the white promoters got us and we started playing in the *auditoriums* instead of just these little halls. When we played those places, the seating arrangements were that the main floor was for the whites and the upper floors and the balconies were for the blacks.

SF: How did that make you feel?

FB: Well, it was the first time I'd ever been down South to do anything, so I really had a mixed reaction. I didn't know what to think and a lot of the times we played we were scared. We didn't know what was going to happen. We were in a place where, since we were black, we had to stay in our place. You had to watch what you do and all these different things when you played these big stadiums. They made it so that when we got through playing, we never mixed with the crowd except for the ones that they had come back and say "hi." There were certain people that were allowed backstage. We stayed backstage all the time.

All this was in Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Texas. We even played for Gene Autrey one time out at his ranch. We played down in Louisiana for big white and black audiences. This is the way it was during the '50s. Anybody that says it wasn't going on, they're lying, because this is what we went through. We played in *big* places. Not no little places. We didn't have but four pieces in the band. Then we added on a piano player. Then we added a saxophone player. A guy named Fat Jackson used to play sax with us.

SF: Can I ask how much the band made for one night's performance?

FB: Well, we was on salary with Little

Walter. What Little Walter got I didn't know. But, at that time we was making $75 a night, plus we paid all our own expenses. Things weren't expensive down there then. You could get a room for two or three dollars a night that you'd pay $50 or $60 a night for now.

SF: Did they record that band in concert ever?

FB: No. We did all our recording in the studio. We had five uniforms that we dressed in. From the shoes up to the hat. Wasn't no such thing of everybody getting different colored bluejeans like they do nowadays.

SF: Did you know the guys in the Butterfield Blues Band?

FB: Yeah, in the '60s I knew all of them because I recorded with them. I made the first recordings with the Seigel/Schwall Blues Band. Butterfield, Bloomfield, Charlie Musslewhite—I recorded with all kinds of different white bands.

SF: Did you like those bands?

FB: Sure. I still know them today. Whenever they're around they stop by and say, "Hey, Below. How are you doing?" I hear from Charlie Musslewhite every once in a while.

SF: Did you ever have a chance to play drum solos in blues bands?

FB: Well, you wouldn't consider them drum solos, but I did some nice breaks which really got tattooed to me. Have you heard the record "Off The Wall"? That's the first one that I ever made and the only one that I really ever had the opportunity to do some work on.

SF: Do you like to play drum solos?

FB: I like to solo if the opportunity arises.

SF: You've always been an excellent accompanist to singers. Can you name some things that are important in backing up singers?

FB: The main thing with the different groups I played with was to learn what they were doing, listen to what they were doing and try to work with them. A lot of times group singers have an idea of doing their stuff when they're singing by themselves. Then when you go into the studio it's a lot different. They have to understand that you're backing them up and they're doing the singing. Certain breaks don't come out right unless both of you get together. A group that rehearses with itself is different than a group that rehearses with a small trio or something like that.

In the '60s, groups started putting rhythm sections with the bands. Before that groups would just sing by themselves, like the Mills Brothers. When r&b groups started coming out, the singers had to learn how to play with a rhythm section. Singing by themselves is just like singing in a church choir. You don't have no backup. In the studio you've got to change it because the drummer—or whoever's backing you—has got to learn how to phrase and do what you're doing. That's a hard one. So a lot of groups used to carry a good strong guitar player with them and they'd have to tell the drummer what to do all the time. Then the singing groups started coming up with rhythm sections, a little small group behind them. That's when the rock 'n' roll groups started coming out. Five guys singing with a three-piece rhythm section backing them.

SF: One thing that's missing from rock today that was always in blues was the use of dynamics.

FB: Yeah. The r&b brought on a little change which was the format for rock 'n' roll. It's gotten to the point right now where the individuals like to play loud. They want to be heard, which is incorrect. You have five pieces and that means if *everybody's* playing too loud, there's no music coming out. In order to play the music you've got to play soft to blend. It's like when you start to bake a cake. You put a little ingredients here and a little ingredients there and you stir it up. Then when you stir it up and mix it up it comes out a beautiful cake. It's the same way with music. That's why a lot of guys don't understand why, if you've got an amplifier as big as this house, you don't have to play that loud. When I was traveling with Junior Wells, we'd go to California and we used to see the Jefferson Airplane and a lot of the different rock groups. They used to play so loud the walls would shatter. A lot of the rock groups were playing so loud in California that the doctors were running full time business, because a lot of people were coming to them with earaches. They're still doing it. When you've got a big instrument, it's not to be played loud in a small place. See, if you're in a baseball field or something and the man back there wants to be heard, then you have to turn it up a little. But, you're not supposed to blast if you're in a small area where the sound's got no way to dissipate. You're just killing everybody.

You can't play dynamics if you're playing too loud. You have no way to go up because you're already up. It's the same way with playing brushes. How can you play brushes if you have always learned by playing sticks? You don't even know what a brush is. A drummer can't hear himself that soft if he's always played with sticks. He can't have no touch if he's never played with a mallet. A mallet has a muffled sound. You can't play it if you've never heard the sound before. You've got to know what each sound is and how to muffle it and tone it down. That's what tone is. You've got to hear the sounds and the beats and different things and make the music blend. You don't just sit up there and get some sticks and "bang-bing-bang-bang." That don't mean nothing. A blending drummer is a hell of a drummer. That's why Max and Blakey and all them cats sound so beautiful when they play their stuff. They blend what they're playing. I

appreciate good drummers. I've seen Art Blakey, Max Roach, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich—the big drummers that I know—and I've seen them work and I notice what they do. They don't just sit up there just to be kicking and playing. They be playing and kicking, but they be blending. Jo Jones! My God! All them. Cozy Cole and Slam Stewart. They don't sit there like they're kicking on a box or something.

SF: When you're playing, are you thinking both rhythmically and melodically?

FB: Melodically all the time. If you have a more rounded idea of music and you're not always listening to one type, you have a better idea or conception of sounds. You've heard soft, loud, different rhythm patterns, beats. You've got a much greater store of music in you. Then you can adapt what you learned if you are well provisioned enough to whatever you be playing. If you hear some blues or some jazz tune and all of a sudden the drummer comes out of a real bag, you say, "Wow, man. Ain't that great. I don't know where that comes from." Then you start learning that that came from "Sheik of Araby" or whatever. But you can use it because you know what you're doing and you know how to put it in.

A drummer never gets out front. If you're playing in a band, the drummer stays behind everybody. Just like if you're in the Army, you've got somebody to back you up all the time. The scouts go out in the front. Well they've got to have some rear guard. The rear guard is your drummer. When the rear guard gets up front, that fouls up the whole thing. You get back there and you kick! If you're a good drummer you should always be respected and recognized. He has one of the hardest jobs in the band because he's got to keep everybody together; to pull everything together to tighten it up. Then push it out there so it sounds nice.

SF: Now that you're leading your own band, do you find that you're using anything that you've learned from the great band leaders you've worked with?

FB: I got a little something from everybody I had the opportunity to work with. I worked with Memphis Slim, Little Walter, Junior Wells, Buddy Guy . . . with all this experience I've learned how to do different things. And they taught me something. Then I wanted to do something on my own for myself.

SF: What made those guys great bandleaders?

FB: A lot of bandleaders are made by the musicians around them. A lot of bandleaders are not great unless they've got somebody behind them good. When you've got good people behind you, that makes you great. All singers have to be strong by themselves. But, a bandleader—if you're not singing and you're just playing, you've got to be strong for yourself, or you've got to know how to get good people to work behind you and make you sound good. This is what makes you great, when you can get people to help make that sound. Teamwork. You know how to keep a team together. You only keep a team together if everybody cooperates. If you can get that type of cooperation from the musicians, they play better. You've got an easy-going band and everybody feels relaxed, you've got a damn good band. If your band's uptight, you can't put the music out. You can feel it. You can hear it. You've got to know how to relax when you play or it'll blow you up. You'll blow your mind, man. Every time you come to work you'll come to work with a headache. You've got to work easy and relaxed and you'll have more fun.

Then, know how to compliment people you work with. Know how to say, "Hey man, that was a great thing you did on so-and-so. Man, that was good." Do these things. These help. Even if they're playing wrong and you know it's wrong, never criticize. The same man that you're criticizing today might be a hell of a man tomorrow. So learn how to keep your mouth shut when you're supposed to and open it when you should.

SF: Attitude is very important.

FB: That's right. There ain't no harm in complimenting somebody. Maybe the next time he'll do it a little bit better. The better *he do* the better *you're* going to sound. Remember: You're playing in the same group. When he plays good, that makes you play a little better. It's supposed to. It won't sound like a band if he's mad at you when you come to work. Or if you're thinking, "When he gets ready to do his thing, I'm going to mess him up." That's frustration. That's no good.

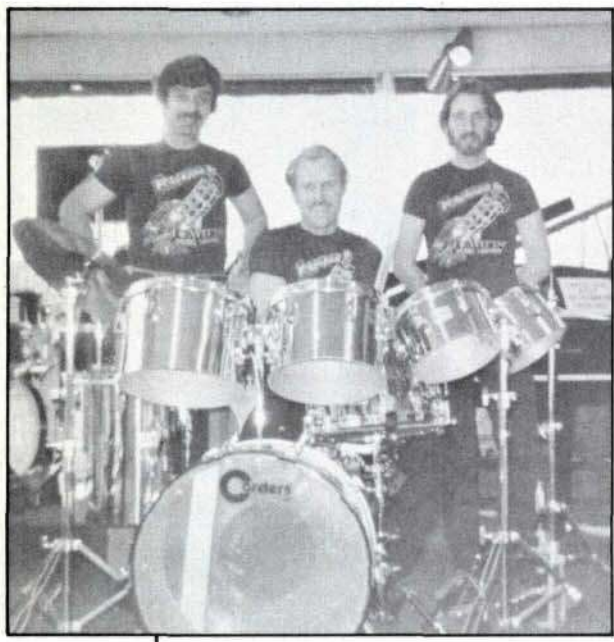
SF: For someone that has never heard you play, could you recommend some albums that would be representative of your drumming?

FB: A lot of my playing, you won't know it, because I play so many different styles with so many different people. I did some of my best work with Little Walter, Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry, and The Moonglows. I did the record with Dinah Washington. The last big record I did was the Golden Hits of Louis Jordan. It was recorded in Europe. But, they didn't put my name on it. They put somebody else's name on it.

SF: So what's ahead for Fred Below over the next five years?

FB: Any and everything. I really don't have no chart. I never liked to pin myself down, and now that I'm able to do everything that I want, I want to just have my fun and just play everything. Whatever job comes along, I'm able to play it.

I've been able to play what I want to play and I play my style: relaxed and happy. I'm happy when I play. I smile all the time. I just enjoy playing.



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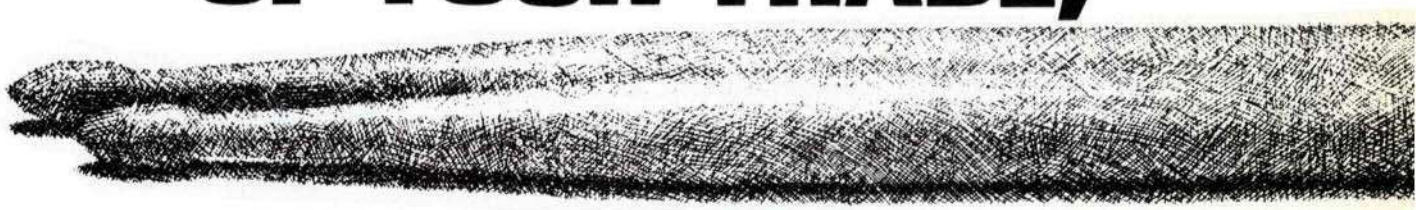

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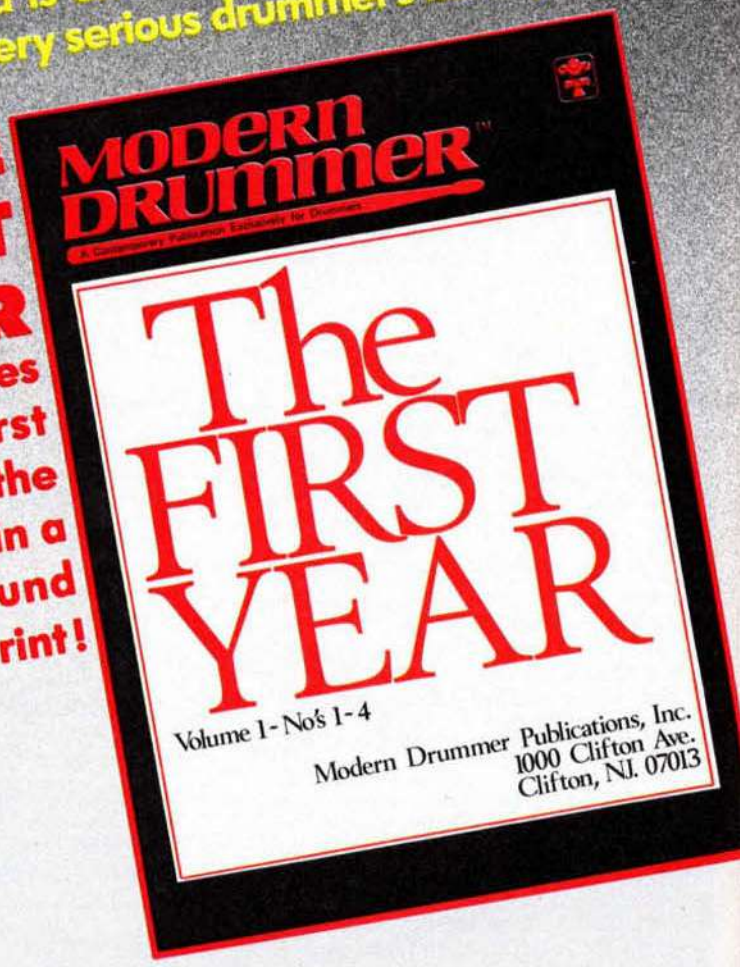

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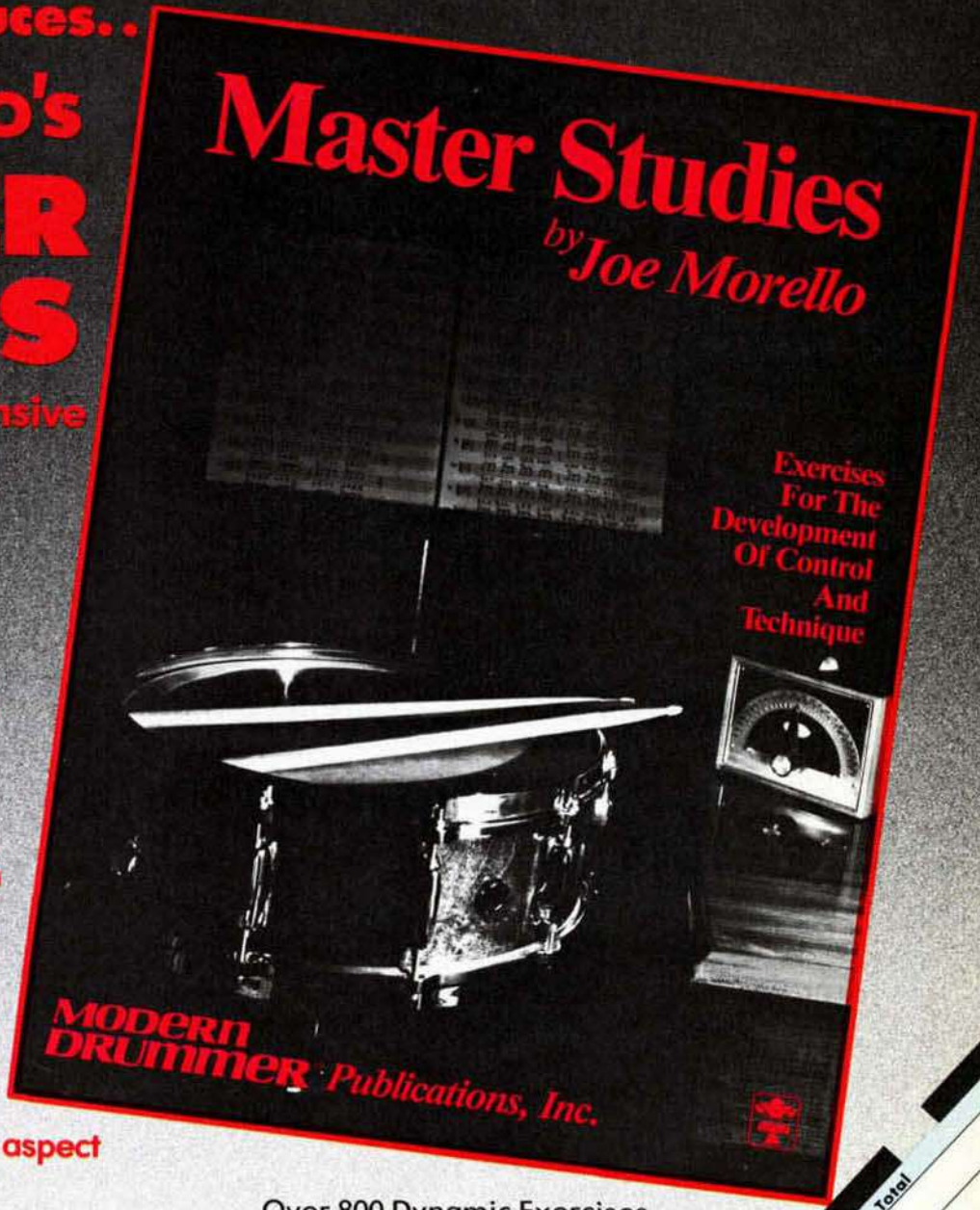

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by Michael Epstein

Q. I've been playing drums off and on for six years and now I'm in the U.S. Navy aboard a submarine where drums aren't allowed in the rooms. Is the practice of "air drumming" good? I know pads are better but I would need a complete set. I usually "air drum" along with music. Please inform me of your opinion.

J.G.
F.P.D. San Francisco, CA

A. You're in a unique position to be sure. Obviously, if you could get a complete set of pads, you would benefit from actual contact with a rebounding surface. As a general rule, we don't recommend playing on pillows or beds for the simple reason that you aren't trying to learn how to play a bed, but rather, the drums. In your case, however, until you find yourself doing shore duty, a pillow or bed may be your best substitute as opposed to beating air. At least you'll be able to work on a version of stick, accent and rebound control. You certainly could take the opportunity to listen to music and perhaps transcribe beats and solos that interest you for later practice at a full set.

Q. What is the address of the ASBA Drum Company? Also, is Orange still making drums?

J.B.
Ft. Worth, TX

A. You can write to ASBA at: A.S. Boudard (ASBA), 11 Rue Henri Barbusse, 94450 Limeil, Vrevannes, France. Orange Drums are also made in France. For information write: S.A. Capelle, La Chapelle 77760 La Reine, France.

Q. I play a 6 1/2" metal Tama snare drum. I've heard a 40-strand snare yields a fatter sound. It is easily adaptable?

R.L.
Sacramento, CA

A. Duplex makes a 42-strand snare that can be adapted to a strainer that uses either snare tape or the more traditional twine. Pearl and Gretsch also offer similar options. More strands are going to give your drum breadth and depth simply because there's more to vibrate.

Q. During the 1983 World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee I saw a steel drum band. Seeing this band play got me eager to learn myself. The only problem is I'm having trouble finding someone to make them. Do you have any information on this?

J.M.
Chattanooga, TN

A. The people who make steel drums are as much artist as artisan and their output of hand-crafted drums is not great. Most of the makers preferred, for their own reasons, not to have their addresses published. We have passed on your letter to several of them and they should answer your request.

Q. I'm trying to put together a collection of the most important records of the best jazz musicians of all time. What books, catalogs or other source material would you recommend to help me?

A.B.
Elmhurst, N.Y.

A. Two excellent sources would be Leonard Feathers's Encyclopedia of Jazz. *This book is a classic. Also, you can write to the Rutgers Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, Newark, N.J. 07102. They have one of the most extensive libraries of jazz in the world.*

Q. I'm a drummer in a heavy metal band. I have a 5-piece Ludwig set with power toms. I have been through lots of different heads but none give me that "thunderous boom" I want. I was wondering if Evans *Hydraulic* heads would do the job?

T.G.
Plymouth, MA

A. That boomy, heavy metal sound is best obtained using a bright, live head. Evans Hydraulics *were created to eliminate excessive ring and overtone in recording situations—a sound characterized by Evans' Sue Vogel as "thuddy" or "dull." Evans does make a two-ply head without oil between the layers which come in a variety of colors. The difference is purely cosmetic. In heavy metal drumming, you're going to have to split the difference between the sound you want to get and the frequency with which you're able to afford head changes. Try putting a Remo* Emperor *on the snare and bass drum batter heads. This might give you a little less of the ring which contributes to a thunderous sound, but you'll get more life out of the heads. Try putting coated* Ambassadors *on the top heads of your power toms and clear* Diplomats *on the bottom. If this doesn't last for you, adjust the top heads to an* Emperor *gauge. The sound guideline to remember is: the thinner the head the more sound you can project.*

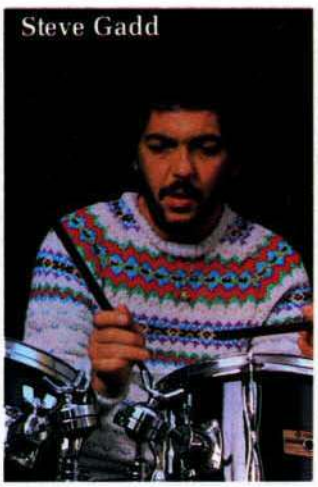
Q. I want to paint my drums with a pattern that I designed, inspired after Pat Benatar's drummer, Myron Grombacher. How would I go about doing this to get a smooth, hard finish? Are there special paints and varnishes I would need? The shells are now a natural finish.

H.A.
Point Reyes, CA

A. Patrick Foley, who customized Myron's drums (which were co-designed by Jeff Chonis), tells us how he did it: "First I sanded the shells with a 180-grit sandpaper on an electric sander. Then I sealed the shells, spraying them with one coat of a nitro-cellulose lacquer. I used the electric sander on this coat. Next I sprayed four or five coats of black universal nitro-cellulose lacquer over this and dry sanded bet ween all but the final coat. Then I used one coat of clear lacquer which was not *sanded. After this, I took pin-striping tape for the graduated grid work and applied it to the shells. Over this I sprayed a cream colored, high gloss lacquer and, while the coat was still wet, peeled off the tape. At that point, I sprayed the hell out of it with clear lacquer. I put five or six coats on and wet sanded with a 400-grit emery cloth between every two coats. I used a spray bottle of water to help remove the gummy lacquer balls that formed from the sanding. Next, I took a stencil for the red balls on the shells and sprayed them on. After that I sprayed on the stencils for the Japanese characters. Then I bathed the shells in clear lacquer, sanding with the wet emery every two coats. I built it up to a high gloss with about 15 coats over the colored lacquers. It had to be done this way with nitro-cellulose because it can only be applied in thin coats. It takes more work than the color enamels, which can go on in two or three really thick coats, but they eventually crack. This won't. I didn't seal the last coat with anything at all."*

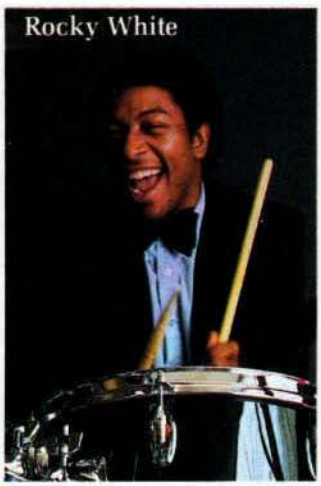
Bear in mind that Pat has had many years of hands-on practice customizing drumkits in this manner. If you're thinking of doing the job yourself you might consider practicing on a piece of wood similar to that which your shells are made of. If you want one of Pat's custom finishes for your drums, write for price estimate to: Patrick Foley, 1600 Montevista, Pasadena, CA 91106.

Four leading drummers, four different styles. Four more reasons for playing Yamaha System Drums.



Because I've always been very concerned with the quality of sound in a drum, I use the Recording Custom Series drums, with these beautiful all-birch shells and a black piano finish. They give me a very controlled resonance with a lot of tone. They let me relax with the music, so I can adjust my touch to any volume requirements. Yamaha drums are very sensitive, and there's always a reserve of sound.

I've always tended to go for simple equipment like the Tour Series snare drum with eight lugs, because it's easier for me to get the sound. Same thing goes for my hardware, which is why I like the 7 Series hardware. I don't require really heavy leg bracing so the lightweight stands are just fine; very quiet, too.

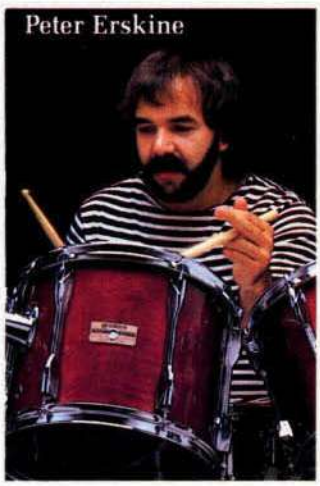


With some drums, there isn't too much you can do to alter the sound. Some will give you a real deep thud, and others are real bright. With Yamaha, I can get both sounds, they're just very versatile. Mostly I like a deep round sound with tight definition, since my concept is that a drum is a melodic instrument like anything else. I can hear drum pitches, and Yamaha lets me achieve that without a lot of constant re-tuning.

As far as their hardware, the snare drum stand and boom stands are very well thought-out. They feel like they were designed by a drummer, and they're not limited at all. The 9 Series snare drum stand's ball tilter is fantastic; you can get the perfect angle for your playing posture. And the boom stand tilter can double as two stands because it doesn't have a long handle. So the boom slides right inside the rest of the stand if you don't need it. All in all, Yamaha is the perfect set of drums for tone quality, sound, and ease of set-up.

I'd been playing the same set of drums for ten years when I met up with the Yamaha people during a tour of Japan with Rainbow. I told them that if they could come up with a kit that was stronger, louder and more playable than what I had, I'd play it. So they came up with this incredible heavy rock kit with eight ply birch shells, heavy-duty machined hoops and a pair of 26″ bass drums that are like bloody cannons. And since I'm a very heavy player who needs a lot of volume, Yamahas are perfect for me. And the sound just takes off—the projection is fantastic so I can get a lot of volume without straining.

There isn't an electric guitarist in the world who can intimidate me, and I've played with the *loudest*. Yamaha drums just cut through better, like a good stiletto. They have the fattest, warmest, most powerful sound of any kit I've played and they can really take it. For my style, Yamaha is the perfect all-around rock kit.



Yamaha makes professional equipment with the professional player in mind. They're just amazing-sounding drums, and the fact that their shells are perfectly in-round has a lot to do with it. The head-to-hoop alignment is consistent; the nylon bushing inside the lugs are quiet and stable so Yamahas tune real easy and stay in tune, too. I have a 5½″ snare and it's good as anything out there. It speaks fast, with a really brilliant sound and a lot of power. When you hit it hard, the drum just *pops*. And the throw-off mechanism is quick and agile, with good snare adjustment—it's a basic design that works.

And Yamaha hardware is really ingenious, every bit as good as the drums. I like the 7 Series hardware because it's light and strong, especially the bass drum pedal, which has a fast, natural feel. What can I say? Everything in the Yamaha drums system is so well designed, you want for nothing. Once you hook up with them, you'll stay with them.

Yamaha Musical Products • A Division of Yamaha International Corporation • Box 7271, Grand Rapids, MI 49510

YAMAHA

UPDATE

by Robyn Flans

John Ferraro has been on an extensive world tour with Barry Manilow. When the tour winds up this fall, he will have been with Manilow for a year. Prior to his getting the gig with Manilow, 1982 had consisted of a tour and album with Larry Carlton, a Japanese tour with Randy Crawford, a week in Las Vegas with Leslie Uggams and some dates with Robben Ford. For Ferraro, diversification seems to be the name of the game and with Manilow, he enjoys playing a multitude of styles. "It's important to listen to different things. Everybody has his favorite styles he likes to listen to, but I try to listen to as many different styles as possible and stay current with what's going on and also know how to play Dixieland stuff, how to play a march, and how to play the big band swing. One of the helpful things for me was going to college and playing in the college big bands. That's where you get your reading together, and that style is very useful for show-type playing, which is what I'm doing right now. But you also have to know how to go over to some guy's livingroom and just jam, playing Cream songs, blues, or ZZ Top shuffles for half an hour. I just do as much playing as possible with as many different players as possible. You should try to play with people who are better than you because there you can get their feedback. Knowing your styles should just come from playing with different people in different situations. For somebody who says, 'No, I'm the best double bass drum guy in the world and I don't need to go do a casual and play a polka or "Hava Nagila," then great, go out and do your rock thing. I wanted to know how to do everything, though. For what I'm doing in this scene, it definitely helps because we've got a wide variety of things. There are some show type things, ballads and now there's even a sort of new wavey/rock tune, 'Some Kind of Friend.'"

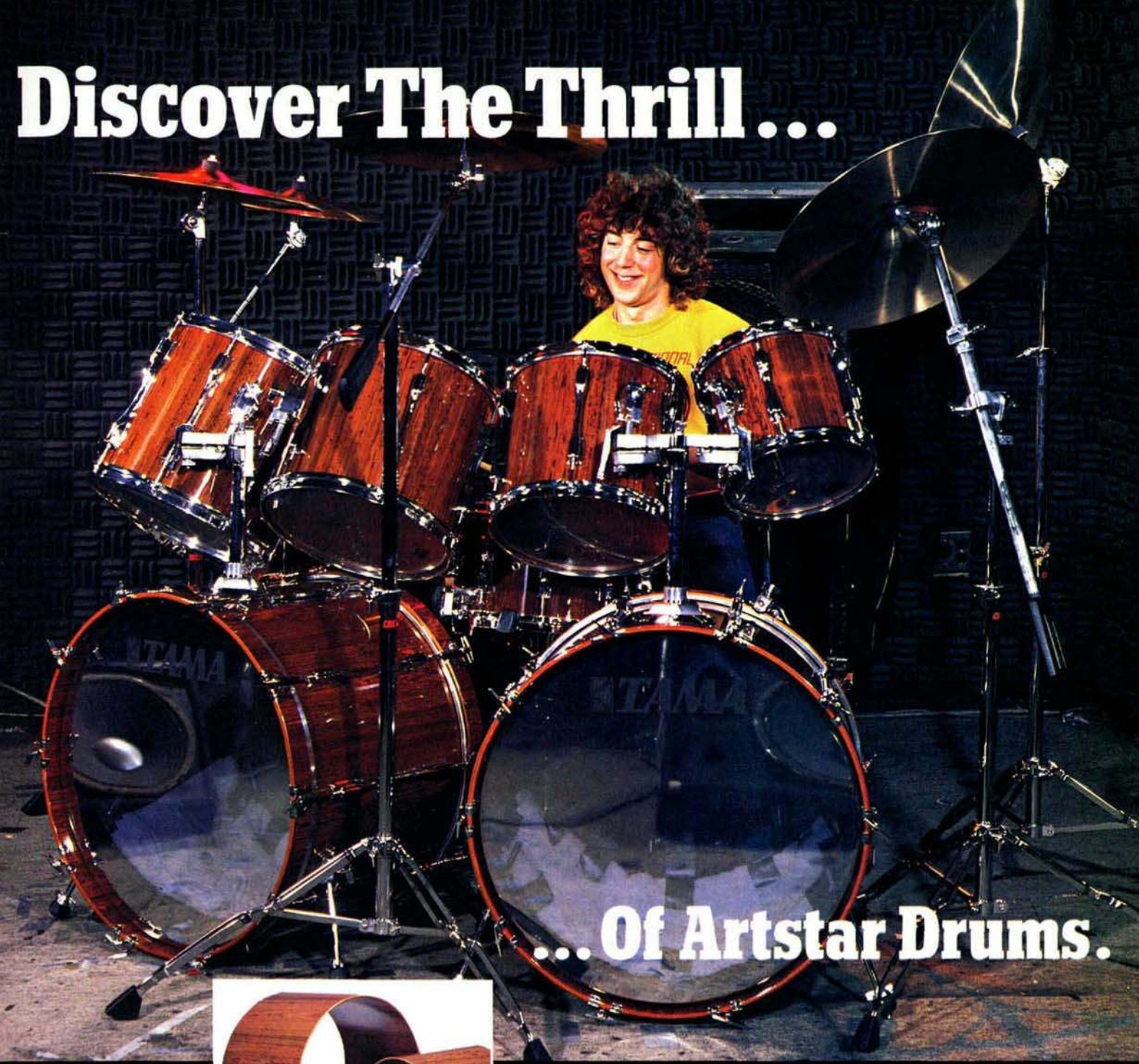
Citing some key pointers in accompanying a singer such as Manilow, John says, "I think dynamics are very important. Drums are rather loud at times and it's easy sometimes to drown out the singer, so you have to be sensitive to what their dynamics are. You also have to be quite aware of the tempos and lyrics of songs. These are musical points, but there are personal points also. Sometimes the singer may say, 'Change this part or do this,' and you have to know how to handle that and not lose your temper or anything. What we're talking about is being an accompanist and your main goal is to make them sound good."

There's never a dull moment for **Michael White.** He's been doing an abundance of recording, including the latest releases by Gene Van Buren, Stanley Turrentine, Wilton Felder, Patrice Rushen, Tavares, Kenny Rogers, Cagney and the Dirty Rats, Linda Clifford, the Emotions and Bobby Nunn's *Second to Nunn* (Motown), a record on which White's playing got a lot of response. "A lot of people called me up because they were real curious as to how I heard that. Most times you sit down and listen to a funk record for the first time, you can say when it's going to crash, but that's not what I did in this case. I would crash on '2' or '3' or on the upbeat—anywhere but on '1' and '4'. To let the people know that I knew what a bridge is, I would crash right on the bridge. My concept for that was just letting the track breathe and put a different flavor in it."

In the spring, Michael went out on the road for eight weeks doing a reunion tour with Curtis Mayfield and Jerry Butler. During the summer he did some Pearl clinics in Japan and as of our discussion, hoped to open a cartage and drum rental company called White Lightning with his cousin Freddie White (of Earth, Wind & Fire fame). The two of them also designed a stick for Rollers, U.S.A., and Michael and Freddie have been working on a drum book for a projected 1984 release. It will cover the various records on which they have played, as well as other drummers' works, including transcriptions by Yogi Horton, Rayford Griffen and Buddy Williams. There will also be a section on tuning and the difference between live and studio drumming, a subject on which he is eloquent. Personally, he enjoys the mixture of both. "People label you once you start doing studio dates, though," he says. "They figure you're a recording drummer and you don't have the fire to go out and play live. When you become a studio drummer, you have to discipline yourself not to be as slick or as free in the studio because you're making records. The main concern is to keep the groove happening, keep it in the pocket, make sure everybody else knows the songs, set up all the bridges and put the crashes in the right place to make the music flow." When he's home in L.A., he plays live at the local clubs in a band he leads called The Names which includes Sheila Escovedo on percussion.

You probably won't get to see **Jeff Porcaro** play live for a while, as Toto will not be going on the road until December, '84, but in the meanwhile, there will be a new Toto album (release date undetermined), of which the group is doing videos of each track. You can also see Jeff this fall playing one tune in Paul McCartney's film *Give My Regards to Broadstreet.* Jeff and Toto members produced and played on Boz Scaggs' new album, and in July, Jeff went to Paris to work on David Gilmore's solo album. This month Jeff begins work on the score for the upcoming film *Dune.* **Carl Palmer** can be heard on Asia's new album due out soon. **Tony Brock** overseas with Rod Stewart. **Danny Gottlieb** anticipates Egan-Gottlieb's second album, *Forward Motion* out next month. **Vinnie Appice** is currently with Ronnie Dio (former lead singer for Black Sabbath). Original drummer **Bill Ward** is back with Black Sabbath with an album due out this month. Look for Van Halen's new album out soon with none other than **Alex Van Halen** on drums. The group will be following the album release with an extensive tour. **Narada Michael Walden** recently produced Patti Austin's upcoming LP. **Hal Blaine** can be heard on current Johnny Cash and Dottie West albums. Drummer/vocalist **Phil Seymour** has joined the Textones. **Gary Mallaber** on some Eddie Money tracks. **Derek Pellicci** on tour with Little River Band in support of their newest Capital release, *The Net.* **Ralph Cooper** winding up last month of six-month Air Supply tour. **Max Weinberg** is on one track *of Air Supply's Greatest Hits,* released this summer. **Carlos Vega** on Melissa Manchester's current release. **Terry Chimes** has left the Clash. The Who went into the studio in June, so we can expect to hear **Kenney** Jones on vinyl again soon. There is a new Rufus and Chaka live album due out this fall with **John Robinson** on drums. The Animals have re-formed with original drummer **John Steele.** Look for a possible live album. **Andre Fischer** on Crusader tracks (he was also on the road with them this summer). The **Paul Motian** band recorded a new album in Europe last July. Watch for its release on Black Saint/Soul Note Records. **Peter Erskine** will be touring Europe and Japan this fall with Steps Ahead. After taking August off, **John Panozzo** and Styx are back on the road, continuing their *Kilroy Was Here* tour. Congratulations to **Kenny Aronoff,** who was married in July. **Tris Imboden** currently touring with Kenny Loggins. **Simon Kirke** now with Wildlife. Their debut album was released on Swan Song. Freddie Hubbard is touring, with **Carl Allen** handling the drumming.

Discover The Thrill...



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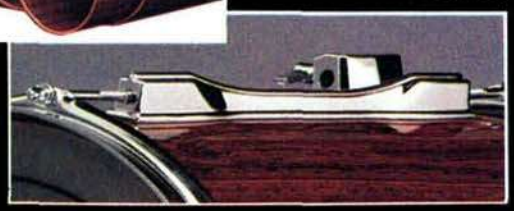
Tama Mighty Lugs eliminate noise by utilizing a nylon retainer, preventing metal to metal contact.



The new Tama Omnilock™ system provides one touch adjustment for mounted tom toms.

When Simon Phillips first sat behind a set of Artstar drums he discovered the thrill of the greatest advance in drum technology today.

A unique 6mm thin shell design and Cordia construction give Artstar a larger than life sound and a remarkable capacity for sensitive expression.

New hardware innovations such as the Tama Omnilock™ system provide fast, flexible and solid tom tom positioning.

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INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS

RHAPSODY FILMS TO SPECIALIZE IN JAZZ AND BLUES FILMS

Bruce Ricker, the Producer/Director of *The Last of the Blue Devils,* has formed a new distribution company called Rhapsody Films. Rhapsody Films will specialize in jazz and blues films for all markets in the U.S. including theatrical, non-theatrical, television, and video cassette sales.

Further, Bruce Ricker and Rhapsody Films will produce a jazz film festival that will be an official part of the Kool Jazz Festival this year for some ten to fifteen cities. For further information: Bruce Ricker (212) 243-0152.

APPICE JOINS CIRCUS

Carmine Appice has become the first contemporary pop performer to join the editorial staff of *Circus* magazine. The announcement was made jointly by Gerry Rothberg, publisher/editor-in-chief of the magazine, and Appice's personal manager, Alan Miller.

In his capacity as contributing editor, Appice will write a monthly column, "Drum Beat," which will analyze top drummer's styles and techniques, and offer practical information to the novice and professional drummer alike.

NEW AVANTI POSTER AVAILABLE

Over-size, full-color wall version copies of Avanti's theme poster are now available to the public. The poster shows the new Avanti cymbal soaring above a colorful highway. The "highway" is actually a computer printout, reflecting cymbal sounds as a human listener might hear them. Colors represent different frequencies.

Posters are available at $5.00 each (check or money order), ready for hanging, from Avanti, P.O. Box 807A, 101 Horton Avenue, Lynbrook, NY 11563.

TALKING DRUMS

The latest issue of *Talking Drums* by Premier Percussion, published twice each year is now available free to all drummers and percussionists from their nearest Premier dealer or distributor. Issue 59 contains news of all the latest products and accessories and other interesting items.

ALL-AMERICAN COLLEGIATE TALENT SEARCH

Deadline for entries for the All-American Collegiate Talent Search (ACTS) will be February 24, 1984. Winners will receive cash prizes and scholarships totaling over $16,000 and auditions by major entertainment companies. All contestants become eligible to be selected for a tour of Europe or the Orient under sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Defense.

Matching scholarship prizes will be awarded to the college department whose faculty or professional staff members endorse one of the top three cash prize-winning student acts. An additional advisor and student performer will have the opportunity to serve on the final judging panel at the national finals.

Any type of performing talent is eligible. Students submit entries either on video cassettes or audio cassette tapes with photographs. Plans are currently underway for live competition in 1985.

Seven national finalist acts will be selected to compete live as an opening act for a major recording artist or television personality at the national finals to be held April 7, 1984.

For further information regarding the competition, contact: ACTS, Box 3ACT, NMSU, Las Cruces, NM 88003; phone (505) 646-4413.

MERF—MUSICIANS HELPING MUSICIANS

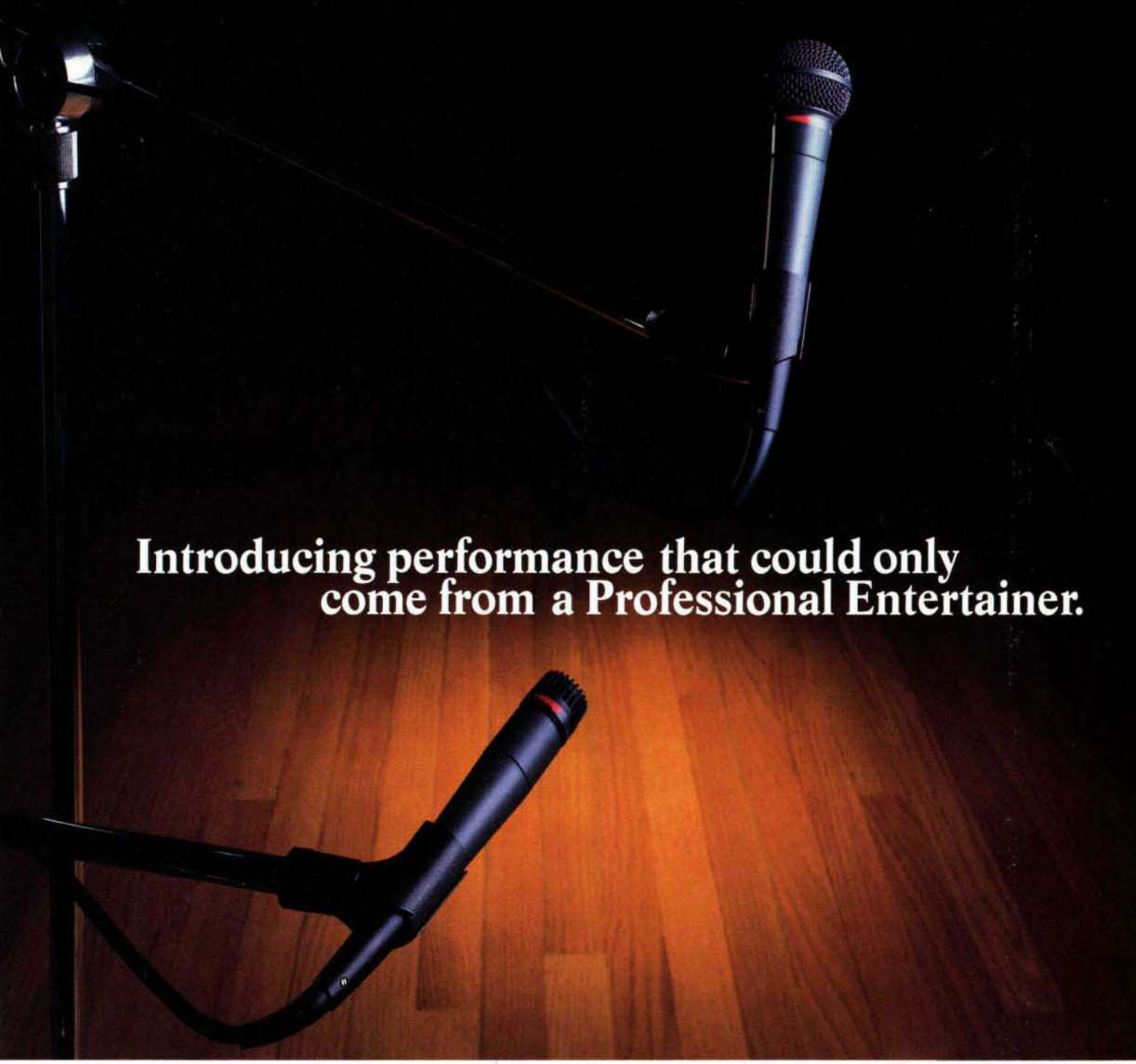
Musicians are usually pretty good about coming to the aid of other musicians who need help. Benefit concerts are given all over the country to raise money for those who are sick or who have been injured, from small gatherings on behalf of a club musician, to larger events, such as the recent benefit held in New York to help Papa Jo Jones. But the musicians in Louisville, Kentucky have taken this idea a step further, and created a fund so that help is available immediately to those musicians in serious need.

The fund is called MERF—Musicians' Emergency Relief Fund—and the idea came from drummer Marvin Maxwell. A couple of years ago, Maxwell crushed his ankle in a car accident. A number of musicians in Louisville held a benefit for him, as he was unable to work for quite a while. They actually raised more money than Maxwell needed, and so, after consulting with the people who organized the concert, Maxwell passed the extra money on to a Louisville guitar player who had leukemia. Then, wishing to show his appreciation for what the Louisville-area musicians had done for him, Maxwell set out to create a fund which would always be available to musicians who needed it, and MERF was born.

To raise money, 40 bands from the Louisville area participated in a benefit concert. Five clubs in a one-block area were utilized, with the entire block being roped off. For a five-dollar admission, one could wander from club to club and hear all 40 bands. Local music stores supported the event by supplying equipment, so that the bands could change each hour with a minimum amount of time needed for equipment set ups. Local radio, TV and newspapers helped out with promotion and coverage, and even the performers and staff members donated five dollars each to the cause. Over $10,000 was raised at that first benefit in '82, and this year's concert, which included even more bands, did significantly better, raising $16,000.

Membership in MERF is limited to Louisville-area musicians. Those who perform at the yearly concert are made honorary members for that year. For others, a five-dollar fee is charged per year. To receive benefits, musicians must appear before an elected committee of other MERF members. At present, there is a $1000 limit on the benefits per person, otherwise, one person with a serious problem could wipe out the entire fund. But as MERF continues to grow, the limit will probably be raised. Musicians are on their honor to ask for only as much as they really need. Thus far, the payments have ranged from a low of $264, to the $1000 limit, and those helped have ranged from a musician with cancer, to a singing drummer whose teeth were knocked out in an auto accident—his insurance didn't cover dental work, so MERF paid for a set of false teeth so that he would be able to resume singing.

In order to maintain the proper control of something like this, it needs to be kept at a local level. But Maxwell and the Louisville musicians who have organized MERF are hoping that musicians in other communities will be encouraged to adopt similar programs. Those wishing further information or advice are invited to contact Marvin Maxwell or Mike Harpring at 2920 Frankfort Ave., Louisville, KY 40206. (502) 897-3304.



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The Shure PE86 and PE66. Two new microphones with the quality and features that have made Shure a legend among professionals.

For years, others have tried to achieve the same sound quality and performance found in Shure's famous SM58 and 57 Microphones. Now, at last, someone has done it. We have. With two new entries in our Professional Entertainer series of microphones. The PE86 and 66. Designed to meet the toughest, most rigorous standards of live performance. At a price that puts both within your grasp.

The PE86 features the identical response as the industry standard–SM58. Perfect for close miking situations. And it includes a ball grille lined with an internal spherical windscreen of fully reticulated foam, to filter out "pops" and diminish breath and wind noise. The result is a clean, lively sound great for rock, pop, R&B, country, jazz and gospel singing.

The PE66 enhances musical instruments, offering excellent results with drums, guitar and electric keyboard amps, acoustic pianos and brass.

Both microphones are extra rugged–Shure is harder on them than you'll ever be. They undergo endurance and quality testing that exceeds anything they'll face in performance.

You put everything you've got into a great performance. Now, there are microphones that work as hard as you do. The PE86 and 66 from Shure.

For more information on the complete line of Professional Entertainer (PE) Microphones, call or write Shure Brothers Inc., 222 Hartrey Ave., Evanston, IL 60204, (312) 866-2553.

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JUST DRUMS

REMO PRE-TUNED ETHNIC DRUMS

Remo, Inc. has introduced a series of pre-tuned ethnic hand drums as part of its *PTS* line. The new drums all feature special *FiberSkyn 2* heads.

The new drums are said to closely duplicate the sounds and playing characteristics of authentic Irish, North African and Brazilian drums, which traditionally are handmade.

The new line includes a 4 x 16 Irish Bodhran drum with wood crossbars, and two North Africa Tar hand drums in 4 x 14 and 4 x 1 6 sizes. All three have fixed heads and *Acousticon* shells with wood grain laminate finish.

Also introduced were 6 x 8 Brazilian Tamborim hand drums with fixed heads, as well as 5" and 8" Brazilian Cuicas. The 8" Cuica has a replaceable head, while the 5" is fixed. All four have *Acousticon* shells covered in metallized coppertoned plastic.

Suggested list prices range from $9.00 for the 6" Tamborim to $47.50 for the Irish Bodhran.

PEARL'S FREE FLOATING SNARE DRUM

Pearl announces the new "Free Floating System" snare drum. Similar to the *Flo-Sonic* snare, the Pearl system allows the snare shell to vibrate completely free of any attachments or holes. The secret is in the bottom diecast rim that holds the 10 free-standing lugs and both ends of the snare mechanism. Snare tension is adjustable at either end. Shells will be available in 5", 6 1/2" and 8" depths. Choice of materials include brass, steel and maple.

CP DELUXE DRUM KITS

With the introduction of *Ascend,* Cosmic Percussion enters the arena of deluxe drum kits. It features 9-ply shells with a natural wood finish, *Sure-Lock* ball joint tom-tom placement hardware, and double braced stands throughout. The parallel-lay snare strainer completes the set that's offered to the professional looking for a drumset with quality.

Write: Cosmic Percussion, 160 Belmont Ave., Garfield, N.J. 07026.

PEARL WILD AND *CX-600* CYMBALS

Pearl announces two lines of company made cymbals: Pearl *Wilds and CX-600's.* The *Wild* cymbals look like and approximate the sound of the Paiste *Rude* series. The *CX-600's* are modeled after the popular Paiste 2002 cymbals. Both lines are moderately priced and are produced in-house at the Pearl drum factory outside Tokyo.

STICKS PACK

Sticks Pack is made to carry drum sticks, mallets, books, magazines, small tools and whatever else you can get into it. This all-nylon stick tote features a shoulder strap, flapped *Velcro* pockets, pockets for pencils or airline tickets, and a large pocket made specifically for carrying drum books. *Sticks Pack* is made of pack cloth (400 denier) and is doubled at the body of the bag, the pouch and the pocket flaps. All seams are reinforced by nylon tape. The straps that fasten the bag to your floor tom are adjustable by two 6" pieces of *Velcro.* Retail Price $40.00.

For further information please write: Paul Angers Productions, 25652 Rimgate #2C, El Toro, CA 92630.

WORLD PERCUSSION PANDEIROS

Thirteen-inch acrylic pandeiros are now available from World Percussion, Inc. in assorted colors. Imported from the Gope factory in Sao Paulo, Brazil, the pandeiro is a crucial instrument in Brazilian samba music and for the Brazilian martial art, capoeira. Also available are pandeiros made of wood, and wood with plastic covering, in various sizes. For further information and catalog, send $1.00 to: World Percussion, Inc. P.O. Box 502, Capitola, CA, 95010.

CP OFFERS COMBO CONGAS

For lounge drummers looking to introduce the authentic Latin tinge to their music, without spending a bundle, Cosmic Percussion, a subsidiary of LP, offers *Combo Congas.*

Combo Congas by CP are a light-duty pair of congas with sturdy chrome-plated stand that will well satisfy all but the most demanding applications.

INTRODUCING CYMBOW—THE PERCUSSIONIST'S BOW

Now a sturdy, portable bow is available to drummers who want to expand their craft. Designed for contact with metal, *Cymbow* allows the percussionist to experiment with new sounds, sustained tones and micro-tonal effects by bowing the edge of cymbals, bells and gongs.

Cymbow is a handmade, hardwood bow. It's more sturdy than delicate horsehair bows. *Cymbow* has strong synthetic fibers which will last for repeated use on metal. Only 17" long and 3 1/2" wide, *Cymbow* will fit easily in most stick bags.

This sturdy, portable bow is available for $35 (including postage and handling) only through: *Cymbow,* 2237 Grove, Berwyn, IL 60402.

The May EA.

It gets into the sound and out of your way.

Inside the drum. That's where the sound happens. That's where the May EA miking system fits.

The first real breakthrough in drum amplification, the May EA system can be mounted easily inside any drum, quickly plugs into live or studio boards. Once installed, it mikes the internal acoustics of each drum individually, amplifying only the drum in which it is mounted, to eliminate microphone leakage and phase cancellation. What you hear is what you feel—pure, unadulterated drum. Nothing synthetic about it.

Capable of being rotated 180°, the unit allows each drum to be individually equalized to balance tone and volume, to let you isolate a wide range of internal frequencies. You get more sound per drum. You get total control.

And the May EA stays out of your way. It eliminates mike and boom stands and frees up the batter head of your drum—frees up your playing. It cuts way back on set-up and break-down time, too. You just plug in and play.

The system that turns on your drum.

- *The specially designed shock mount eliminates mechanical vibration.*
- *The external turning knob allows the system to be rotated a full 180° for proximity effect.*
- *The 3 pin cannon plug connects the unit through a shielded cable to balance the line out for compatibility with live or studio boards.*

Look for the May EA at your local drum dealer or contact: May EA, 8312 Seaport Drive, Huntington Beach, California 92646. Phone (714) 536-2505.

May EA

Listen for the May EA when played by these leading artists: Chad Wackerman with Frank Zappa/Danny Seraphine with Chicago/ Carmine Appice with Ted Nugent/Joe Lizima with Johnny Mathis.

The microphone element (a modified SM-57) is manufactured exclusively by SHURE BROTHERS, INC. for May EA.
May EA is also available through Slingerland Drum Company on all catalog drums.

May EA is protected under U.S. Patent #4,168,646. Other U.S. and Foreign patents pending.

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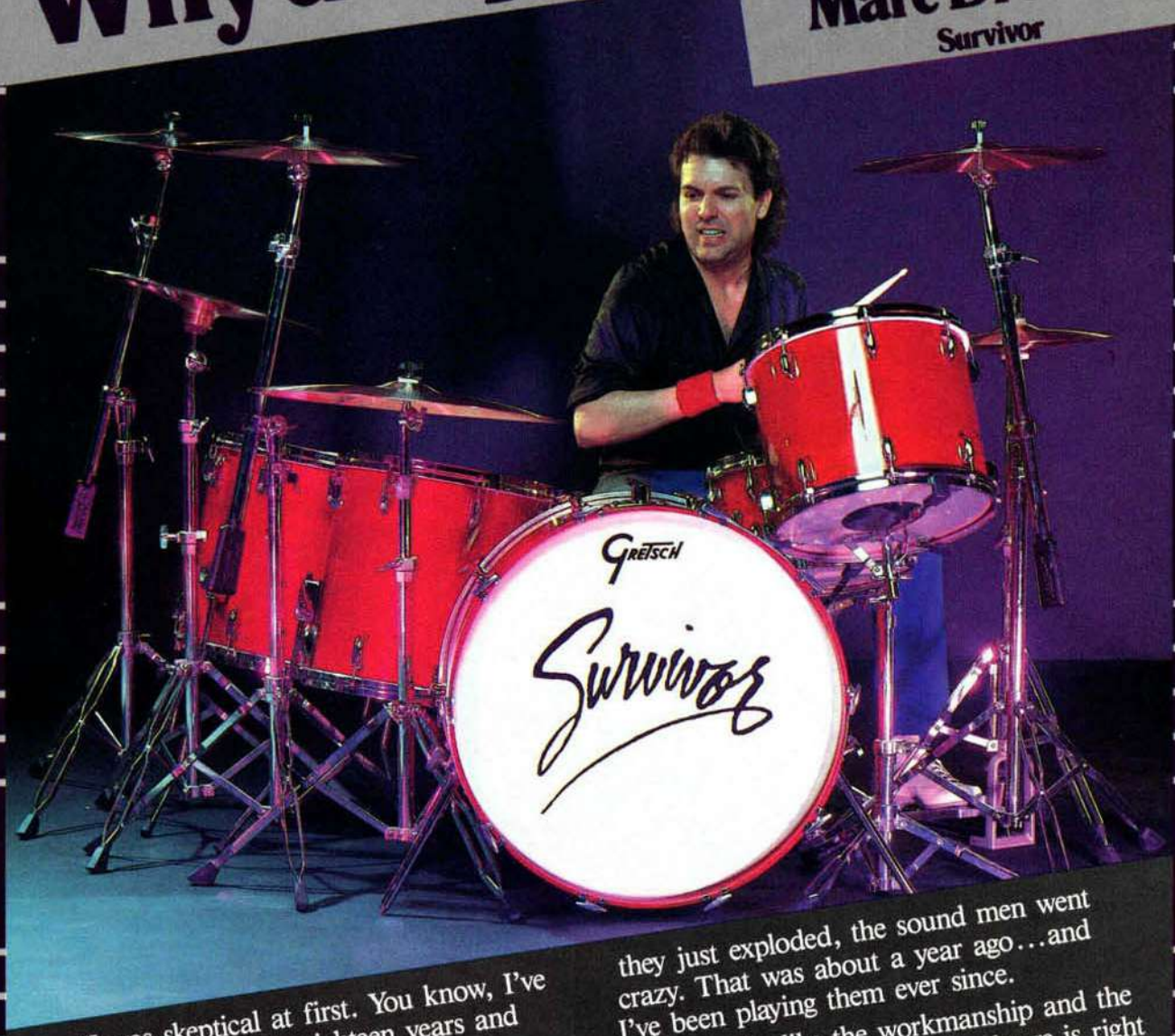
Marc Droubay
Survivor



"I was skeptical at first. You know, I've been playing drums for eighteen years and I've only used two kits. And I'd always thought of Gretsch as a jazz drummer's drum. Tony Williams is one of my favorite drummers and he always plays Gretsch. I wasn't sure if Gretsch had what I needed. But they have. A big, beautiful sound that fills up the hall—it's fantastic!

"The first thing that I really noticed when I played them was their projection. You know, it's real hard to get that punch and definition out of most drums, but when I set up the Gretsch drums, and I played them, they just exploded, the sound men went crazy. That was about a year ago...and I've been playing them ever since.

"I really like the workmanship and the detailing. Their new line of hardware is right 'up to date'...it's taken a lot of wear and tear. It's real sturdy.

"I play Gretsch on the road and in the studio."

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